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[MRS. GRIFFITHS WENT INTO HER CHAIR AND TOOK BARBARA TO HER ARMS.]

A GREAT COST.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. GRIFFITHS was sitting under the trees waiting for her son to come down from his study, and her little guest to return from her sojourn out in the country lanes. The tea-table was ready, the old-fashioned silver glittered in the sunlight, and the steam was rising from the spout of the kettle, the pretty tea-cups were waiting to be filled. Mrs. Griffiths was knitting away at some stockings to be worn by one or another of her many proteges. She glanced from her corner now and then down the garden.

"The child is late!" she said to herself once, "I hope she has come to no harm. She is still so weak, and Joe is no longer in his first youth. She promised not to be out too long. I shall send Owen to look for her if she is not here soon. Poor little thing! my heart aches for her. She is fretting about that brother of hers; and I am sure she is miserable, because she

fears Lady Bridgeworth's anger—not for herself, but for us."

Mrs. Griffiths rocked herself to and fro in her chair, and looked about her with a sigh.

"I should be sorry to leave here," she thought on. "I love the place, and my boy has been so happy here; but if it is to be—it must. There are some things one cannot submit to, and Lady Bridgeworth's attitude towards this poor child is to me unpardonable. We are not rich in the world's goods, maybe," was the next thought; "but"—taking up her knitting again—"we have still a store of pleasant treasures to draw upon, and our charity and hospitality is not the least among these."

There was the sound of voices in the near distance, and then came the click of the gate; and then the little cavalcade of Barbara in her chair, with her old attendant on one side, and a young handsome one on the other, came slowly along the path. Mrs. Griffiths put aside her knitting.

"Just in time for tea, my child! I was beginning to be a little nervous; you have been out so long. Ah! Sir Humphrey, this is delightful!

We shall be quite a merry party. Shall we get this young lady out of that chair?"

Humphrey had greeted the gentle silver-haired lady with genuine warmth; and he turned now, and helped Barbara to alight.

He put her into a chair, and smiled reassuringly into her shy, beautiful eyes. She was trembling still from the nervous excitement that had come upon her.

Mrs. Griffiths glanced at the two before her with a quick sympathy.

"How kind he is, and good!" she said to herself, and then she moved, leaning on her stick to the tea-table. As her back was turned Humphrey stole one of those little quivering hands, and bending his head hurriedly pressed it to his lips. Then rearing himself to his full height again, and still holding that hand, he spoke out quickly, eagerly,—

"Dear Mrs. Griffiths—I—I have something to say to you, please?"

Owen's mother turned, and looked round with a smile.

"Is it something very important, Sir Humphrey?" she asked; and then, as she saw their linked hands, her smile went quickly. The full

seriousness of the position came upon her. She stood leaning on her stick, and waited for him to go on.

"It is very important," Humphrey answered her immediately, "and very difficult, for I want to express my gratitude for all you have done to this little one, and I don't know how to begin."

Mrs. Griffiths suddenly held out her hand. "Come to me, Barbara," she said, with infinite tenderness. She sank into her chair, and as the girl came to her swiftly, not quite certainly, sinking on her knees beside the chair, she took the slender form in her arms, and pressed the lovely, tremulous face to her heart. From over that bowed head she looked across into the young man's handsome face, with its earnest frank expression and noble air. He answered that mute look.

"I love her. She will be my wife!" he said quietly.

Mrs. Griffiths's face flushed for a moment, and her hold closed tighter upon that slender form.

"You must forgive an old woman, Sir Humphrey!" she said, with a weak, little laugh. "We are apt to be full of fears and anxieties, and things do not go so quickly with us as with your young people. I—"

Humphrey came across to her swiftly, and clasped her thin hand in his.

"I understand all you would say, and you are right to say it. I am in sympathy with all your sweet thoughts and tender care of her. I have not known you long enough to even call you friend, Mrs. Griffiths, and yet, somehow, I feel we are friends, not new ones, but old tried ones—who thoroughly understand and sympathize with one another." He pressed the word hand tenderly, and then fastened the fingers of that bright hair. "I love her," he said again, looking into the elder woman's eyes with an intensity and a truthfulness that carried the listener's conviction to her. "I love her. It seems to me I must have loved her always, though I did not know her until these few days ago. I am not sure to change in anything. I shall love her as long as my life lasts."

Mrs. Griffiths's eyes were full of tears. How she remembered that, and the past on the before her that sweet, sweet past, when a lover's voice had rung in her ears as this young man's, and a lover's vows had been pledged to her in the summer sunshine. Romance was in a true woman as long as her heart beats; and this romance was dealt with very gently by the widowed woman, who had given Barbara almost the only mother's care she had ever had.

Mrs. Griffiths smoothed that shining hair with her hand trembled a little. "Have you looked well into the future?" she asked in a low voice, gravely. "Have you considered everything, weighed every consequence?"

Humphrey said "Yes," very quietly. He made no protestations, nor did he say more to urge his cause, and Mrs. Griffiths liked him the better for that. Still, though her woman's heart went out to their love, her knowledge of the world, a faint uneasy feeling—was it a presentiment?—forced her to put matters clear before him.

"She is very young—a child!" she said, gently.

Humphrey's eyes rested on the slender form held in that tender embrace.

"I will be everything to her," he said, "father, mother, husband. She shall be my child."

Mrs. Griffiths was silent, but her eyes spoke to him a hundred thoughts her lips did not utter. She seemed to be recalling plain facts to him—his honorable old name, his proud position, his little knowledge of this girl, the gossip of the world, perhaps the sorrow that follows on a hasty act and mistaken idea.

Humphrey answered her eyes with a smile, and a look of resolution on his handsome face.

"I never change," he said. "I am free. I love her, and I will make her my wife. She

—she has promised me, with your consent. She cares a little now; by-and-by she may learn to care more."

"That will not be a difficult or impossible task," Mrs. Griffiths answered, with her gentle smile. "See! Here comes Owen. Shall we make tea Barbara, you and I?"

Sir Humphrey, obeying the unspoken hint, she gave him, turned and went to meet Owen, while Mrs. Griffiths chatted on, and gave the girl one or two little easy tasks to perform.

"We must not tire you," she said, as she watched with pleasure the varying colours in the beautiful face before her.

"I—I am not tired. I feel quite strong," Barbara answered—hurriedly, shyly. She dared not let her eyes wander to that other part of the garden where he stood, so brave, so handsome, so good. Her feelings were complex, and not easy to understand. But though she could not sort them she was conscious of one stronger and prominent above the rest, and that was a sudden joy that was connected solely and wholly with that tall, stalwart form, that tender, manly voice, and those beautiful eyes, that had looked at her with such intensity and meaning. All the love and yearning she had over Cyril, that poor dead Cyril, was mingled in this sudden happiness.

Barbara felt as though the sun would be set for her this day when Humphrey Lascelles had gone through the low garden gate and passed out of sight.

The two young men did not talk long, but much was said in that short conversation.

Naturally Owen Griffiths was tremendously surprised, and he said so frankly. He was more, too, and put into words all the thoughts that had crowded his mother's brain.

"Yes; you are your own master. You are free to choose what wife you like, Lascelles," he said, as they strolled to and fro; "but," he paused.

"I know every 'but' you will suggest," Sir Humphrey returned with a smile. "They have no terror for me."

"Will you not consult your sister?" Owen asked, hurriedly, his face coloring a little at mention of Mariel's name.

"I shall tell her everything immediately," but the young man paused, "somehow, Griffiths, it seems to me a question that affects the most important moment of one's life; it is not possible to consult with any other being. Mariel is very dear to me, but all the words she could say against this could never change my love. Put yourself in my place—if you can for a moment, and see with my eyes. Did I seek this love—did I know it was so close upon me? Ten days ago I was ignorant of Barbara's very existence, but that is all nothing. A new impulse has been put into my life suddenly, yet none the less absolutely. I seem to live for the first time," his handsome eyes glanced through the trees to that girlish figure, with its coronet of burnished hair. "I shall never live again without her!" he finished quietly, certainly; and Owen Griffiths felt he was speaking solemnly, and with absolute truth. He was silent again. He was thinking of Mariel and of Josephine Bridgeworth, and he looked troubled a little.

"I have not known you very long, Lascelles," he said at last; "but, somehow, we have grown into a friendship that has nothing new or strange about it. I seemed to know you at once. Miss Lascelles has spoken of you so much to me. I know her love for and pride in you, and so—"

"Do you think I shall pain her by this?" Sir Humphrey asked, and he answered the question himself. "Mariel thinks only of my happiness, and like us all she has been drawn to my little one."

"To make her your wife!" Owen said, hurriedly, "should you not seek to know something more of her, of her family and life, of—"

"You do not doubt her, Griffiths?"

"Heaven forbid," the young clergyman answered. "I am convinced of her purity and

beauty of mind and nature. Have I not proved that? I believed in her at once without any proof."

"Then if you are satisfied, why not?" Sir Humphrey asked. He put out his hand. "Let us say no more, Griffiths," he said; "the matter is settled. I love Barbara, and I have asked her to be my wife. I am sure that both you and your mother will continue to show the great kindness to my future wife that you bestowed so freely on an unknown, sorrowful girl."

They clasped hands, and in that clasp Owen Griffiths mutely promised to be firm to the friendship he had already demonstrated so nobly. The tea under the trees was a merry one.

Barbara said very little. She lay back in a low chair, and answered with a shy word now and then, her sweet eyes going to her lover's handsome face with a sort of yearning that touched him to his heart of hearts.

Owen laughed and chatted, and Mrs. Griffiths dropped cake and milk to all her animals, all assisted by Sir Humphrey, who loved this, and was beloved in return by every creature he encountered, and the hour was full of harmony.

Humphrey rose to go at last. He was loth to leave, but duty to his hostess demanded he should do so. As he rose to say good-bye a groom in the Bridgeworth livery came up the path, and touched his hat to Owen.

Her ladyship's compliments, and would Mr. Griffiths kindly make it convenient to drive back to Torchester House in the carriage waiting, as her ladyship wished to see Mr. Griffiths immediately.

"We will go together," Humphrey said quickly. He had caught sight of the troubled look on Mrs. Griffiths's face, and his heart swelled as he felt his eyes rest on Barbara's loveliness, and the memory of Lady Bridgeworth's strange suggestion to the girl came back to him. He had never heard a word of Josephine's visit to the cottage from either of the young girls; but he recalled Colonel Lascelles's words, and he felt that Owen Griffiths's presence was required for no pleasant purpose; the fact, that the opinion of Barbara was so closely connected with it, and that the trouble she had spoken of to him was about to fall upon her benefactors after all.

He parted from her with a whispered word, and a promise to be with her early in the morning, and then, stooping, he kissed first her hand, and then Mr. Griffiths's white-worn ones, and then turned away, and walked to the carriage with Owen.

"Don't think me presumptuous, Griffiths," he said, "but I have, somehow, a notion in my mind that this call for you is connected with Barbara, and her presence under the roof. If I am wrong forgive me, but if otherwise then, well, with a sudden flush "what concerns Barbara concerns the most sacred and beautiful part of my life now, and so Lady Bridgeworth must be given to understand without delay."

CHAPTER XII.

HUMPHREY LASCELLES paced up and down the hall of Torchester House while Owen Griffiths was in conference with his mistress in the dining and luxurious boudoir.

The young man longed to speak out the full burden of his mind. His first impulse had been to make a stir in the conference, but a second courtesy and tact forbade this; if even Owen had not suggested gently and quietly, in answer to his first speech, that "anybody was mistaken, and that this sudden call from Lady Bridgeworth might, after all, be only connected with some of his parish work, in which the mistress of Torchester House took a lively interest."

"I will wait for you here," Humphrey said, as they stood in the hall, and a servant was waiting to conduct Mr. Griffiths to the boudoir; "and I ask you to be sure to re-

member me. If this matter should be what I imagine I have a right to take my share in giving an explanation, if any is needed."

Owen nodded his head and passed up the stairs with an expression of gravity on his earnest face. Although he had felt it would be impossible for him to say anything more to Humphrey on the subject of his marriage with Barbara he could not help dwelling on it, and wondering what would be the outcome of such a sudden thing.

Lady Bridgeworth was sitting at her writing table as the young clergyman came in. She had on a beautiful tea-gown of shimmering silk and rich laces, but the softness and femininity of her attire only served to accentuate the hardness and bitterness in her face. She did not rise or extend her hand to Owen; she merely bent her head stiffly.

"You wish to see me at once, Lady Bridgeworth?" he said, as he stood within the door.

"I have been waiting for you to come for the last few days, Mr. Griffiths."

"I have had no occasion to trouble your ladyship."

Josephine tapped her pen against the edge of her desk in a sharp sort of way, and smiled a hard, disagreeable smile.

"I fancy if you reconsider, Mr. Griffiths," she said, "that you will be able to modify that statement."

Owen Griffiths coloured a little.

"I am never one to beat about the bush, Lady Bridgeworth. I like to be dealt with straightforwardly. Will you kindly tell me what you require of me?"

"I want one of two things," Josephine answered, almost fiercely; and, turning, she fixed the young man, looking at him with cold, angry eyes. "I hoped I should not have occasion to speak on this subject again, Mr. Griffiths. I imagine I was sufficiently explicit when I called at your house the other morning; but as it seems there is some wilful or accidental misunderstanding on your part, I must go over the matter again."

Owen Griffiths kept his eyes fixed on that hard, handsome face for a moment.

"The misunderstanding was wilful, if you like it put in that way, Lady Bridgeworth," he said, quietly. "I wilfully chose to imagine that you had probably repeated you of an extraordinary act of unkindness, and I am afraid I must add unwomanliness too. I see now I was mistaken."

"You are insolent. How dare you!" Josephine said, swiftly. She rose and swept to the window in her rage.

Owen Griffiths' pleasant face was almost as stern and hard as her own.

"Lady Bridgeworth," he said, quietly, "after such words I regret there is no alternative left me than to resign the appointment I now hold. I allow no one, not even Lady Bridgeworth, to dictate to me in matters of my private and domestic life; nor," with a slight pause, "do I permit anyone to offend or wound my dear mother, as you chose to offend and wound her the other day. I am grieved that the connection between us should be terminated so unpleasantly, Lady Bridgeworth; but there are some things that can never be overlooked, and your strange conduct during the past week or so is one of these things."

Owen Griffiths took up his soft hat.

"I shall be ready to hand over all authority in the parish as soon as you have appointed a successor. Till that time, you may rest assured, I shall continue to fulfil all the duties to the best of my power."

He was half turned to the door when Josephine stopped him.

"And so, for the sake of a worthless drab," she said, bitterly, "you actually intend to cut yourself from your parish and your home? You are an enigma to me, Mr. Griffiths!"

"I am a very simple enigma, Lady Bridgeworth," was the reply, "one that you may easily understand if you will. I will be frank with you. It is one of the greatest pains of my life to have to separate myself from a place

and people where I have spent such peaceful, happy years; but you have left me no alternative. It is true I hold this living from your hand, Lady Bridgeworth; but I am not your servant or your slave. I am a free Englishman, who will, please Heaven, find work and happiness elsewhere, but who will never permit anyone to bias him or interfere with what he considers his duty."

Josephine's face was white and drawn.

"What duty do you owe that girl?" she asked, suddenly.

"The duty of a man for a weak, unfortunate creature—the duty of a Christian to give help where help was so surely needed, the duty of charity, not only bodily; but morally. Barbara Vereker is now as pure as an angel; but Heaven knows what she might have become had she remained in Longstone, subjected to harsh, unmerited treatment, and put every day into close companionship with those poor lost girls, who call it their home."

"You seem to be very assured of this creature's purity and innocence?" Josephine said, with a harsh laugh.

"My calling gives me many opportunities for judging character. I know I am not mistaken in this one."

Josephine was twisting her lace-handkerchief in her strong, white fingers.

"Probably Mr. Griffiths' opinion might be different were this Barbara Vereker as ugly as she is pretty."

Owen's face flushed.

"We will not discuss this matter further, Lady Bridgeworth. You are angry, and not in the mood to approach it with any degree of fairness. It is ended now. I have tendered my resignation, and we shall part, I hope, at least good friends." Then Owen stopped.

"Will you answer me one question," he asked, "before we drop the discussion for ever?"

"What is your question?" Josephine asked, coldly.

Owen looked across out of the window for a moment. He could see a slight, pretty figure, sitting under the trees in the distance. The sight of Muriel pressed him to put this question, for it touched her very nearly.

"Forgive me if I pain you, Lady Bridgeworth," he said quickly; "but I could not fail to see that day at Longstone that there existed some previous acquaintance between Barbara Vereker and yourself. It is not of that I wish to speak, but—Owen's face flushed a little—"

"It has struck me that, perhaps, I am wronging you in thinking hastily of you. Perhaps you are actuated by some good motive in what you have done. Perhaps you have the right to try and send this child back to her poverty, and sorrow; and so—though it gives me pain to even suggest a doubt where it seems no doubt can be—I ask you now, most solemnly, to tell me if you know of ought in this girl's past life, any shadow or stain, that precludes her from being received by our world, or from taking the place that her birth, nature, and beauty entitles her to do?"

Josephine looked at him steadily out of those cold hard eyes.

"You have some reason for asking this," she said, in a choked sort of way. She knew in this moment that she had fought for nothing, that the blow was about to fall with its full force, and her hopes and plans be carried to the ground with it for ever.

Owen nodded his head.

"Yes, I have a reason," he answered. There was a pause between them for a few seconds. "I urge this, Lady Bridgeworth, most solemnly. If there is aught you know against Barbara Vereker—any shadow of disgrace and sin of her own doing—any blot or stain on her young life—to speak out now, boldly and firmly, and so save what might prove a lasting sorrow to a noble-hearted man, and a shame to an honoured name."

Josephine's breath came sharp and painful for the moment; a sort of mist rose over her eyes, a dazed, confused sense came in her brain. She had thought herself strong, she had told herself a hundred times during the

last hour that she had grappled with sorrow overcome her disappointment; and now the moment had come, and had found her weak and trembling in every limb as a child.

There was an infinity of pity in Owen Griffiths' heart for this cold, selfish woman in this moment. His sympathy was so keen, so great; the touch that his daily calling made upon it had increased it to a marvellous extent. He seemed to see, to know, to understand without any words, and Josephine's suffering was very easy to him to read.

"You will recognise my wisdom in asking this, Lady Bridgeworth," he said very gently, forgetting all his indignation in his pity. "when I tell you that Sir Humphrey Lascelles has this very afternoon announced to me his determination to make Barbara Vereker his wife."

"He must be mad!" The words were spoken faintly through the white lips. Lady Bridgeworth was leaning with one arm on the white, carved mantel-shelf, her figure erect as ever, but Owen could see that she was trembling from head to foot.

"It is no madness of a man to love a woman," he answered still gently; "and that Lascelles does love this girl is very, very certain. But though his love be strong enough to face the world as things are now—and it is a great test to any love to have to bear the brunt of what the world will say to almost unworthy action—Still I believe that his honour is as dear to him as his heart's happiness; and that though he were to suffer the tortures of death Humphrey Lascelles would never willingly make a shamed woman his wife. Therefore, once again, Lady Bridgeworth, I urge you to be frank, and to speak out the truth about Barbara Vereker."

Josephine stood silent. A myriad different thoughts crowded through her mind, and a jealous, insidious impulse arose in her to speak out as he said, and with some few hard words, so to ruin and blacken this girl's character, as to cut her off from this chance of happiness for ever. The temptation was awful, but Josephine did not yield. It was not honesty, honour, or principle that held her back. It was the fact that were she to speak proofs of what she declared would be sought for—and there were no proofs against this sinless child, whilst in searching for substantiation of her words who knew what might not arise? And there was that in her own part, that Josephine Bridgeworth had no desire to meet in this public and unpleasant fashion. The wrong had been none of her seeking; but what mercy would the world give her on this point? There was wrong, and she knew it, and at all hazards she must keep the grave closed over that past. If she had suffered a few moments before her suffering was twice as great now. Her face was ashen white, and Owen Griffiths turned pale as he watched her.

"She will conquer," he said to himself, and he felt a stronger sympathy for her, and a new respect. Human nature was no secret to him, and he felt that this woman was going through one of the bitterest struggles a woman could endure. He longed to put out his hand and help her to come out of that miserable struggle, but he dared not let her know he comprehended anything of the truth. His face lighted up almost into beauty as she spoke. Alas! his heart would have been sore within him if he could have known what base and selfish motives they were that prompted her to the decision she took.

"I know nothing either for or against Barbara Vereker," she said, in hard, metallic tones, "save that which is already known—her brother's disgrace and dishonesty."

"A brother's sin is not hers," Owen said, in that same gentle way. His voice, always beautiful, was doubly so now.

Josephine laughed mirthlessly. "It is an unpleasant and awkward accompaniment to a wife," she said; and her tone and words jarred on him with the new thought of her lingering in his mind.

"Lascelles has weighed every objection. I

ventured to point out all the possible difficulties; but," with a smile, "love triumphs over all in his case."

Lady Bridgeworth bit her lip sharply. The blow that had fallen to day would leave a trace that would never be effaced; but the dormant part of this woman's strong, powerful nature was not crushed by it. She called every wit and nerve and brain into requisition. She reviewed her roused forces, and prepared to face the inevitable with a determination that was little less than courage. There was nothing definite in her mind as regarded the future; but one thing she was resolved—to keep her secret to herself, to face the world with a smile, and hold her head proudly to the last.

She looked across at the young man before her. She had been furious with him, and she feared him a little, but her sense of justice made her admire and respect him. She acted and spoke apparently on the spur of the moment; in reality, her vivid brain had spun out a new web from the broken threads of the old one.

"Mr. Griffiths," she said suddenly, and with the grace of which she had so much at her command. "I am going to ask you two favours, and I hope you will try and grant them both. They are not very difficult."

Owen turned his face, bright and encouraging.

"If there is anything in my power I can do for you, Lady Bridgeworth, you have only to command me."

Josephine held out her white hand.

"Forgive me, forget all I have said. Be generous, and let us continue together as friends and fellow-workers."

The young man's face flushed.

"I have already forgotten," he said, in a low voice, and then his lip quivered. "I confess it would have been a pain to me to have left Rochester, Lady Bridgeworth."

"Then you consent. You will remain?"

He bowed his head.

"I will remain," he said quietly, holding her hand; "and your other request, Lady Bridgeworth?"

Josephine coloured very faintly. She turned her face away a little.

"Let no one know anything of this matter between us. You see I—I made a mistake. Mr. Griffiths, and it is never pleasant to have to acknowledge over and over again one has been wrong."

So the little mistake is forgotten with the rest."

Owen finished.

"And you will tell no one—not your mother?"

Muriel, nor Sir Humphrey."

"I will tell no one—absolutely no one," was his answer.

Josephine received, and she smiled almost in her old easy way.

"And now let us discuss business," she said.

"I have a tremendous amount to arrange with you."

The next quarter of an hour was given up entirely to parish matters, in which Josephine showed all her usual cleverness and shrewdness, and when at last Owen rose to go, the former part of the interview was as though it had never been.

"And you will go there at once," Lady Bridgeworth said, as they stood in the doorway.

"I should like you to see Bradley yourself."

"I will go there this evening," Owen answered; and their voices reached Humphrey, who was waiting below. He listened doubtfully still as he heard Josephine pressing Mr. Griffiths to remain and dine, his brow cleared. Then there had been nothing disagreeable. She was speaking quite brightly. He felt pleased, and gave a sigh of relief. Like every Englishman Humphrey loved peace in everything.

He turned and sauntered out of the doorway with Owen when he came down, and Josephine stood at the bend of the staircase, and saw them go.

"It was a clever move, and the only one," she said to herself, and then she went back to her room with compressed lips.

"And so there was no row," Humphrey said, in a sort of boyish fashion to Griffiths, as they walked across the grass to Muriel. "I am jolly glad, as I do hate quarrels."

"Lady Bridgeworth wanted me on some very important parish matters," Owen said quickly. The least prevarication was disagreeable to him; but he had pledged his word, and must keep it. "But," he said more brightly, "I ventured to speak about you, Lascelles; and I informed Lady Bridgeworth that you had matrimonial views in your mind. She was naturally surprised, as everybody will be; but everything is all right, and I am glad to think it is!"

If Owen could have seen into the future he would have chosen any course rather than the one that cemented a friendship between Lady Bridgeworth and Humphrey Lascelles and his young betrothed.

(To be continued).

THE BELLE OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER VI.—(continued.)

THE Earl stood for some minutes in the shadow of an orange tree, idly plucking the fragrant blossoms, and scattering their petals on the floor, but this occupation was soon interrupted by the entrance of his page—his favourite attendant—a pretty and handsomely-liveried youth of sixteen.

"If you please, my lord," said the page, with a deep bow, approaching his master, "there's a gentleman come to see your lordship on business."

"Very well, Julian. It was not necessary to come to me about the matter. Tell the gentleman that I see no one on business this evening."

"I told him so, my lord, and he has gone. He left a letter for you, my lord, and bade me tell you that he would call again as soon as he could—to-morrow, if possible. Here is the letter, my lord," and he extended a silver tray, on which lay a missive.

"Put it up till to-morrow, Julian. You should have known better than to annoy me with business this evening."

"But, my lord, the gentleman said it was a matter of life and death to your lordship."

His curiosity being aroused the Earl took up the missive, and his attendant retreated.

At the sight of the cramped and peculiar handwriting on the envelope the Earl started, and hurriedly tore open the epistle.

His gaze seemed actually to devour its contents.

His countenance grew fairly livid as he took in the meaning of the brief note. His eyes almost started from their sockets, and the paper rattled in his trembling hands.

"Escaped!" he said, in a hollow voice, crumpling the letter in his hand. "Escaped!"

He glanced over his shoulder with an apprehensive look, and started at the sound of his own changed voice.

"Escaped!" he repeated. "I am in imminent peril! Any hour—any moment—any second—may see me doomed! What shall I do?"

He stood communing with himself for some time, gradually recovering his self-possession, but the livid hue remained upon his scared face, and his manner was full of apprehension and suspicion.

Endeavouring to resume his usual manner, he again sought his guests, and was the gayest of the gay—but his gaiety was forced and unnatural.

Lady Clair remarked to Lady Calton that the Earl seemed suddenly to have regained his lost youth, and his youthful recklessness, and love of gaiety.

The Earl visited his supper-room many times during the evening, but the only effect produced upon him by his frequent draughts

of wine was to steady his nerves and give him artificial courage.

The dances finally ended, the guests made their adieux, declaring the ball had been a charming success, and carriage after carriage rolled away with its lovely freight to aristocratic homes.

Finally, the last guest had gone, Geraldine had retired to her own apartments, half the lights had already been extinguished, and the Earl of Montford walked through his deserted rooms absorbed in thought.

"It must be! It shall be!" he declared, trampling upon a bunch of roses that had fallen from some beauty's hair. "Whether Geraldine loves Lord Rosenbury or not she must be married to him—and without delay. I am over head and ears in debt, and I can only be restored to prosperity by this marriage. And as to this other most fearful peril menacing me," and he shuddered and looked fearfully around him. "I must instantly take steps to free myself from it!"

CHAPTER VII.

"My plots fall short, like darts, which rash hands throw
With an ill aim, and have too far to go."

—Sir Rob. Howard.

ON the Monday subsequent to the death of Mrs. Lorraine, her remains were buried in the little churchyard.

Lady Rosenbury and Lord Rosenbury, with Walter Lorraine, were the chief mourners; but the tenants, one and all, attended the funeral to pay their last respects to their late friend.

As Lady Rosenbury set down the young artist at the gate of his lonely cottage she urged him to come up to Rosenbury House during the day, and gave him her hand a cordial, earnest pressure.

Lady Rosenbury had returned from Crofton House on Saturday, and immediately on hearing of his affliction had hastened to him, bestowing upon him the most gentle and motherly sympathy; and the result of her kindness was that Walter felt quite cheerful as he now entered the cottage.

He had expected to find it dark and deserted, but, contrary to his expectations, the windows were raised, admitting the balmy air and the hum of bees; the white curtains swayed gently to and fro, and upon the wooden mantel-piece were two great pitchers of garden flowers.

Hearing a bustling noise in the kitchen Walter turned his steps in that direction, and a homelike picture met his gaze.

A small fire blazed on the hearth, and the bright copper teakettle sang merrily, sending forth clouds of steam.

In the centre of the white floor stood the table, covered with a snowy cloth, and spread with the pretty pink dishes that had been presented to Mrs. Lorraine on her wedding-day by her too-indulgent mistress.

A roasted chicken, some toasted Sally Lunns, steaming hot, and two small jars of clear and delicate preserves made up a dainty and tempting repast.

As Walter regarded these preparations with considerable surprise, the open doorway of the kitchen was darkened, and Martha entered from the garden, with her dress pinned up about her waist, and a bunch of crisp radishes in her hand.

"So you've got home, Mr. Walter?" she said, proceeding to wash and prepare the radishes for the table. "Please sit down. I'll make the tea in a minute!"

"I'm sorry you've taken all this trouble for me, Martha," returned Walter. "I have no appetite—"

"But you must eat, sir, if you want to live. You've eaten nothing scarcely since you came home. I beg of you, do eat something. That chicken is very tender, sir!"

Unable to resist Martha's persuasions, particularly after all the trouble she had taken,

to secure his comfort, Walter took his place at the table.

Martha hastened to make the tea, while she chattered busily in order to keep the young man's mind occupied with trivial things.

"There's as good a cup o' tea, Mr. Walter," she declared, "as can be got out o' Chinee, if I do say it. It'll clear your headache right away—see if it don't."

"You are very kind, Martha," responded Walter, taking the cup extended to him. "I little expected to find you here, or the cottage so cheerful."

"There's no praise due to me, Mr. Walter," said Martha, helping herself to the tea. "Not but what I had the will, but I shouldn't have thought of it. It was Lady Rosenbury as whispered to me, before we went to the church, and told me what to do, and so I obeyed her directions. Her own maid brought over the preserves, and I hope you'll try 'em, sir!"

This new manifestation of Lady Rosenbury's kindness brought tears to Walter's eyes. He saw that her ladyship had thoughtfully prevented his return to a darkened and desolate home, and had exercised a motherly care for his welfare.

"Lady Rosenbury is very kind," he said, after a pause. "I shall thank her when I go up to the House by-and-by. But my thanks are due to you too, dear Martha. I shall not forget your kind and cheering actions."

"Oh, dear, I've done nothing, Mr. Walter, to be remembered," declared Martha.

"Mr. Walter! Why do you call me 'Mr.' when you have known me all my life?" asked the artist, with some surprise.

The woman hesitated a moment, and then said, frankly,—

"It's true I used to call you, 'Walter,' sir, when you was a boy, and I kep' on doing so in your absence. But when you came back a grand gentleman like, it seemed more natural to say 'Mr. Walter.' Besides, your poor mother, before she was taken ill, had a habit of always speaking of you as 'Mr. Walter,' respectful like, and us neighbours got the habit of her. I love you just as much as ever, sir, but it comes more natural to me now to think of you as a gentleman sir."

The "sirs" she bestowed so liberally testified to her sincerity, even if her earnest tones had not.

Walter smiled faintly at her explanation, and then became thoughtful.

"If you please, Mr. Walter," exclaimed Martha, after a long silence, which she had occupied by refilling the young gentleman's cup and heaping up his plate, "have you decided what you shall do now?"

Walter aroused himself, replying,—
"I shall return to London to-morrow, I think."

"But, sir, there's business to be seen to," said the woman anxiously. "To be sure, the cottage belongs to Lord Rosenbury; but the furniture, the pictures which you painted, sir, the chancy-ware, the beddin' and house-linen—all these have to be cared for—to say nothing of the wearin' apparel."

A shadow crossed Walter's open brow, and the thought occurred to him—Did not all these things belong to Colte Lorraine? He felt an instinctive repugnance to having Mrs. Lorraine's clothing sold by her husband, and he therefore replied,—

"The furniture will have to be packed in cases. The china and pictures I should like to keep, because they were dearer to my mother than all the rest of her possessions. As to the clothing, my dear Martha, please accept of it. She would have given it to you herself, if her thoughts had not all been about me in her last hours!"

Bertha accepted the gift with silent gratitude. The wardrobe of the late Mrs. Lorraine had been much above her station—thanks to Walter; but good Martha had no thought of its value beyond its associations.

"There's one thing more," she said, lowering her voice. "Your poor mother confided

the secret to me when she felt she was going to die. I'll show you!"

She proceeded to the pantry, returning with an old cracked sugar-bowl, which she handed to Walter. It was half filled with gold and silver of all sizes and degrees of value.

"She saved it for you, Mr. Walter," explained Martha. "She begun to save it when you was a wee baby. There must be over a hundred pounds in the bowl. When she told me the secret of this money, she said that Lord Rosenbury had cared for you so handsomely that you had no need of this. She then begged me to ask you to keep this, just as it is, for a certain purpose!"

"Did she state the purpose?"

"Yes, Mr. Walter. She said that sometime, notwithstanding that letter from Australia, she couldn't somehow think that Colte Lorraine was dead. Strange, wasn't it? And she wanted you to keep this for him, and give it to him, if he ever comes back. I tried to reason with her that Colte was surely dead, but she only repeated what she'd said before!"

Walter was astonished at this recital, but took charge of the contents of the bowl, promising that Mrs. Lorraine's injunctions should be faithfully carried out.

After a little further conversation with Martha, Walter went into the little parlour, opened the door that the broad beams of sunshine might enter the room, and seated himself on the threshold in the shadow of the little porch.

He felt bereaved, but not desolate.

Gradually his thoughts passed beyond his present grief, and he mused upon the goodness and tenderness of Lady Rosenbury, and yearned over the lovely being to whom he had given his deepest, holiest love, and to whom he had consecrated his noblest, loftiest aspirations—and Lady Geraldine Summers!

In the midst of his musings the gate-latch clicked, and Lord Rosenbury came up the walk.

Walter arose and greeted his visitor politely.

"It's a beautiful day, Walter," observed Rosenbury, when he had shaken hands with the young artist.

"The sunlight is charming, and your little garden here smells of pinks and lavender. Surely, all these sweet influences must be as balm to your soul, and must insensibly soothe your grief!"

Rosenbury's manner was friendly enough, but it lacked the essence of true sympathy, so Walter merely bowed in silence.

"I came over to have a little talk with you," observed his lordship, plucking a sprig from the clematis covering the porch, and placing it in his button-hole. "Shall we sit out here, Walter? I much prefer the open air to the parlour!"

Walter assented, and was about to bring out a chair for his visitor, but Rosenbury declined it, seating himself upon the clean step, and Walter resumed his seat upon the threshold.

Rosenbury had a reason for preferring the open air to the parlour for his interview with the young artist.

From his seat upon the doorstep he had an excellent view of Rosenbury House, with its grand towers, at opposite extremities, and its grand central edifice. He could also see its beautiful plantations, and the edge of its grand park, while before him lay the Rosenbury fields, with their acres of grass and grain, and to the left was distinctly visible the village of Rosenbury Heath, a large portion of which village belonged to the Rosenbury estates.

With the glittering prize thus spread before his vision, Rosenbury had no fears of turning traitor to his own selfish interests.

Besides, he was afraid to enter the room where Mrs. Lorraine had died—the room in which he had learned that he was not Lord Rosenbury, but had usurped the place rightfully belonging to Walter Lorraine.

"Well, Walter," observed Rosenbury, after a pause, "what are you thinking of doing now?"

"I shall go on with my profession, of course, my lord," responded Walter.

"But would that be best, with your mind so distracted by your bereavement?"

"You forget, my lord," said Walter, sadly, "the communication I made to you the other day in regard to my feelings towards my poor mother! But even if my mind had been distracted by her death, work would be the best panacea. Because a grief has fallen upon me, I have no intention of idly folding my hands and sinking into melancholy. Suffering is the lot of all, and he is noblest who bears his grief with the most patience and resignation!"

"You are very philosophic, Walter," returned Rosenbury, "but you talk like one who has not suffered very deeply."

Walter flushed, then paled, but remained silent.

He could not deny that there was truth in the remark. Instinct, although he knew it not, had directed his filial affections into a different channel.

"I know very little of grief," said Rosenbury, furtively watching his companion, and secretly displeased that his last remark had hit the truth; "but, of course, it must be a terrible thing to lose a mother! I know how I should feel if her ladyship would die!"

"Do not speak of such an event!" exclaimed Walter, with a shudder. "Heaven grant, my lord, that her ladyship may be spared many happy years to bless others and to enjoy life!"

Rosenbury's brows contracted for a single moment as he listened to this earnest expression, but he said, quietly,—
"No one can love my mother better than myself. And so, Walter, to return to our subject, you think of going on with your profession? You wish to give up the cottage?"

"I do. I have no use for it now. Martha will take charge of the furniture, putting it in cases, and storing it in her own cottage for the present."

"Very well, Walter. I shall be sorry, however, to lose you so completely from Rosenbury Heath. The son of my dear old nurse will always have a claim upon my affections, apart from his own noble qualities."

"Thank you, my lord," responded Walter. "I shall not forget your kind expressions."

"We quite made up our past differences the other day, did we not?" asked Rosenbury, with an assumption of frankness. "You regard me as your friend, do you not, Walter?"

Walter assented, although with a wondering expression on his bright, handsome face.

"Well, then, as your friend, Walter, let me give you a little advice. Throw up your profession. What's the use of daubing your fingers with paint, and cleaning brushes all your life long?"

"That's a novel view to take of my glorious profession," said Walter with a smile. "But, my lord, I do not clean my own brushes. I keep a man to do such things for me."

"Well, Walter, you know what I mean. Why make existence a bore? Why drudge away these lovely days? Why not see life? In short, my dear Walter, why don't you travel?"

"I have travelled, my lord," replied the artist. "I have wandered up and down the Rhine, making pictures as I went; I have studied my art in Italy, and have felt at home in her beautiful cities and among her ruins! I have visited the Italian lakes, and Swiss mountains, besides making myself familiar with Scotch and Irish scenery."

"But all that is merely a taste of travel," said Rosenbury. "I know you, with your artist's soul, delight in beautiful scenes. Why not seek them out? My father left you an income of five hundred pounds a year, did he not?"

Walter assented.

"But five hundred pounds looks small to you, does it not?"

"Not at all," declared Walter. "I don't use more than half of it. Besides, my paint-

ings bring me in as much more during the year."

Rosenbury looked thoughtful a moment, and then said,—

"Why not go to Paris, Walter, and see something of life? In quitting your present quiet existence, you would, of course, need more money than you now have. I will settle upon you an additional five hundred a year, if you will go to Paris and enjoy yourself!"

Walter looked puzzled, but hastened to declare,—

"I have no taste for a gay life, my lord. I have visited Paris, and know that it is very beautiful and charming and all that, but I have no wish to reside there. While I decline your generous offer, allow me to thank you heartily for it!"

"Oh, not at all, Walter," responded Rosenbury, considerably disappointed. "By the way, did you ever think of going to the Holy Land and to Egypt? What places for an enthusiastic painter like yourself! Think of painting those dusky beauties who live on the banks of the Nile and sport in its sacred waters! Would you not delight in picturing on canvas the arid deserts of Arabia with oases shaded by cacthy palms? Ah! if I were an artist I'd start for the East to-morrow!"

Walter smiled, a sudden recollection coming over him that years before he had expressed these very sentiments to his present companion; but, without endeavoring to trace a connection between that fact and Rosenbury's remark, he said,—

"I used to feel as you do, my lord—in fact, I was very enthusiastic on the subject of the mystical East. But I am older now, have seen more of men and manners, and my native country has grown unspeakably dear to me. No scene in Egypt, with all its associations of the far past, can speak to my heart as do the quiet hills and misty dales of dear old England! No people can ever be so interesting to me as my own, and no women so beautiful as my countrywomen!"

"You are patriotic," remarked Rosenbury, his countenance changing. "As for me, I have a longing for pictures of the East, and I should like them done by your hand. While you refuse to go to Egypt for pleasure, would you not do so for business? I will make you an offer. If you will go to the East to paint me some pictures, I will pay you a thousand pounds a year during your absence, and you may take as many years as you like in painting the pictures." What do you say?"

"That your offer is munificent," replied Walter, thoughtfully; "but that I cannot accept it. I appreciate your kindness, my lord, but I am in no need of pecuniary assistance. I fear that you are actuated more by a desire to assist my fortunes than to possess my pictures," he added, with a smile.

Rosenbury bit his lip and turned away his head to hide his bitter disappointment.

He had fancied that it would be easy to bribe Walter to leave his native country—leaving him free to woo the lady of their mutual love, and without a fear that his titles and estates might ever by any possibility be wrested from him—but he had found that Walter could not on any pretences be induced to go.

"There must be some strong tie, Walter, to attach you so strongly to your native land," he said, after a pause. "You think our country women so beautiful—is there not one who is to you the type of all the rest?"

Walter blushed, the light in his violet eyes deepened into a strangely tender expression, but he made no reply.

"If you think of marriage," continued Rosenbury, "speak freely to me—I may be able to help your fortunes."

"I have no thought of marriage," replied Walter, with reserve. "My only bride is my profession, and I dare say it will never have a rival. You have taken a great deal of interest in me to-day, my lord," he added, "and I can hardly comprehend that I have so suddenly found a friend in you!"

"Oh, there's nothing strange about it," said his lordship, carelessly. "I promised your mother just before her death that I would be the friend to you that my father was, and I am only endeavouring to fulfil my promise. I am only sorry that my endeavours should be so unacceptable."

"Believe me, my lord, they are not so!" declared the young artist earnestly. "I appreciate your kindness, even while I cannot accept it."

"And I deprive myself of an immense pleasure on purpose to see you to-day," said Rosenbury, with an assumed smile. "Not that I regret the fact, my dear Walter, but I was engaged to dine with the Earl of Montford yesterday, and this evening I was to attend his ball. You can judge of my friendship for you when I assure you that I was actually engaged to open the ball with the earl's lovely niece—the Lady Geraldine Summers!"

Walter started as he listened to this communication, and his manner betrayed considerable agitation, so that Rosenbury could read plainly the artist's sentiments towards the lady mentioned.

"I am sorry your lordship should have deprived yourself of such a pleasure on my account," he said, in a constrained tone.

"No occasion for sorrow, Walter. I shall see the Lady Geraldine and the earl to-morrow, as I start for town in the morning, probably by the same train as yourself. Is there no way in which I can be of assistance to you?"

The young artist replied in the negative.

"Well, well, Walter, regard me as your friend. If you ever need assistance, come to me. I am making you a very long call, am I not? Oh, by the way, won't you return to Rosenbury with me? My mother desires to see you!"

The artist assented, and went into the parlour for his hat. When he returned Rosenbury drew his arm familiarly within his own, and they passed out of the gate, proceeding together along the pleasant country road that led to Rosenbury House.

As they went along, his lordship talking busily, one thought occupied Walter's mind—why had Rosenbury taken such a sudden and fervent interest to him?

CHAPTER VIII.

The soul of music slumbers in the shell,
Till waked and kindled by the master's spell,
And feeling hearts—teach them but lightly—
pour

A thousand melodies unheard before.

—*Pepe's Human Life.*

A BRIEF description of Rosenbury House may not be unacceptable to our readers.

As we have said, there was a central edifice, flanked by a couple of grand old towers, which were partly festooned with ivy, and hoary with age. The towers were much older than the main building, which connected them. They were three stories in height, battlemented, and furnished with the quaint, painted windows, with tiny diamond panes, of olden times. The central edifice was two stories in height, and presented a very long, handsome front, looking upon a smooth green lawn and a broad avenue, shaded by magnificent lime trees.

The lower floor of the western tower was a favourite retreat of Lady Rosenbury, and had been fitted up by her as a boudoir.

The room was circular and lighted by several pointed windows, as we have described. It was carpeted with a gorgeous Turkish fabric, which, according to oriental fashion, left a border of bare floor. This floor was of rich dark oak, laid in a curious pattern—and was quite as handsome as the carpet which concealed its centre. The furniture was of mixed styles—a divan or two inviting to slumber in their yielding embraces; a couple of fauteuils stretching their cushioned arms to

embrace a weary form; footstools, covered with dainty embroidery, abounding; one or two high-backed, richly-carved chairs occupying corners. There were niches in the pretty painted walls occupied by marble statuettes, and the walls were hung with pictures.

Most of these pictures had been painted by Walter Lorraine, and comprised some of his best works painted in Italy.

There were one or two portraits, however, painted since his return, and one of Lord Rosenbury, painted before Walter's departure.

This last picture portrayed a middle-aged gentleman, with tawny hair and dark eyes, whose countenance were an expression of benevolence and innate goodness.

Although the furniture was incongruous, but not inharmonious, the appearance of the room itself remained unaltered from its original conception, save in one respect. A long French window had been cut in the side looking upon the fountain and park, and a light balcony projected it.

This window had at first been a great eyesore to the late Lord Rosenbury, but he had been wise enough and loving enough to finally rejoice in anything that gave his lady pleasure, even though that pleasure had its foundation upon an architectural absurdity.

The long window was open and Lady Rosenbury stood upon the balcony, engaged in throwing crumbs to a crowd of birds whom she loved to feed both in summer and winter, when at Rosenbury House.

She was a very beautiful woman, about forty years of age, yet retaining a youthful freshness and bloom. Her hair and eyes were dark, and the former was as glossy and the latter were as lustrous as they had been twenty years before. Her complexion was delicately fair, save in her cheeks, where it bloomed into the hue of the rose. Her form, which must have been slender and lithe in her youth, had developed into a graceful fullness, which gave to her an air of queenliness and majesty. There were no lines about her face, no threads of silver in her abundant hair, no faltering in her step. She was in the glorious maturity of her charms, and it would be many years before time would lay its touch upon her beauty.

There was, of course, a reason for this youthful freshness and beauty, at an age when many women begin to look weary and worn.

Lady Rosenbury had known no cares and few sorrows throughout her gentle life. Her husband had abetted her carefully from every trouble, every disappointment, had studied to gratify her wishes before they were known to herself; and not a grief had shadowed her fair brow until death removed him from her. She had never kept late hours, had loved exercise in the free country air, had found her best happiness in making others happy, and, finally, her heart had always been the abode of pure and gentle thoughts.

Having dispersed all her crumbs to the birds, Lady Rosenbury amused herself in watching them for a little while, and then she re-entered her room, seated herself at the piano, and played a brilliant fantasia. The wild, stormy sounds she evoked from the instrument seemed at variance with her mood, and she sang a strange old ballad, accompanying herself on the piano with a low, tender tune. But this brought a momentary shadow to her face, and she quitted her seat, and went to the book-case, which stood at a little distance.

The book-case contained a well-chosen little library, for her ladyship's exclusive use. The best novelists, the best poets, and the best historians, the best books of travel, and the best humorists, all found a place upon her shelves, and all showed that they had been thoroughly perused. Selecting a volume from her collection, her ladyship seated herself to read.

She had hardly interested herself in the work when a low rap sounded upon the door communicating with the drawing-room. The

door opened, and Lord Rosenbury entered, followed by Walter Lorraine.

"Ah, Walter!" said her ladyship, with a pleased smile, rising and giving him her hand. "You have come to make me your promised visit! I am glad that you are not shutting yourself up to mourn. Be seated!" She indicated to him one of the easy-chairs, which he accepted, while Rosenbury threw himself upon a divan.

Lady Rosenbury resumed her seat, saying—

"I should have insisted upon your returning home with us to-day, but I knew you would prefer to be alone during the first few hours after your poor mother's burial. I shall, however, insist upon your remaining now at Rosenbury for some days."

"Oh, impossible!" declared Walter. "I thank you, dear Lady Rosenbury, but I cannot leave my London affairs longer than to-morrow. I must return to town in the morning."

"Since you will not remain, we will go with you," said her ladyship. "Raymond had decided to go, at any rate, but I would gladly have remained here on your account. Have you arranged your mother's affairs?"

Walter briefly explained the disposition he had made of the furniture, &c., and Lady Rosenbury replied—

"Have the things you desire to keep sent hither to-night. They shall be stored in one of our lumber-rooms, or the pictures shall hang upon my walls. By the way, how does my picture get on—the one you promised me, you know?"

"It is finished."

"Finished! What is its subject?"

"That must be a secret from your ladyship until you see it," said Walter, with a smile. "I want to surprise you!"

"You will succeed in your object, then," returned Lady Rosenbury, "for I haven't the slightest idea what it can be. When am I to see it?"

"At any time your ladyship chooses. I can send the picture to your town-house, if you prefer it, although, if not too much trouble, I would like you to take your first look at it on the easel. Your taste is so well cultivated, dear Lady Rosenbury, that you might be able to suggest improvements."

Rosenbury had listened to the conversation with some impatience. There were several points about it that he did not like. First, he did not like such friendly relations to be established between Lady Rosenbury and Walter. He could not forget that they were mother and son, though both were ignorant of the fact. Secondly, he did not like to be shut out of their conversation.

He, therefore, asked several questions about the picture in question, and intruded himself so thoroughly that Lady Rosenbury finally said—

"My dear Raymond, Walter and I want to talk about pictures, which is something, you know, that you have no interest in. We will, therefore, excuse you, if you prefer to follow your own pursuits, and will join you at dinner!"

Rosenbury flushed and bit his lips, but he was too well-bred to insist upon remaining where he was not wanted; so, twisting his whiskers fiercely, he made an elaborate bow and withdrew.

Once outside the door leading into the drawing-room, he paused and listened. He soon heard his name uttered by Lady Rosenbury, and immediately determined to play eavesdropper.

A single week before, Rosenbury would have been shocked at the bare idea of listening to a conversation not meant for his ears. He had been brought up to consider such an act dishonourable and mean. But the barrier of virtue had been broken down by the revelation of Mrs. Lorraine, and the resolve that had resulted from it. Henceforth, he would hesitate at nothing that threatened to imperil his titles or impair the success of his wooing.

Stooping, therefore, and placing one eye to the keyhole, Rosenbury listened to what followed.

"I am sorry that Raymond has so little taste for art," observed her ladyship, with a sigh. "I used to think in his boyhood he would grow up to be a great painter, but I have been sadly disappointed."

"But how could you form such hopes when he was so very young, dear Lady Rosenbury?" asked Walter.

"Why, I thought, of course, he must inherit my tastes. Before his birth I painted a great deal, having a thorough passion for the art; but as he advanced in years I laid aside my brush and my hopes for him together. Do you know the first thing that attracted me to you?"

Walter replied in the negative.

"It was this. You came up to Rosenbury one day with your mother when you were a wee little fellow, and made your way into the portrait gallery. There I found you, crying to kiss one of the pretty ladies on the wall. I thought then you would be an artist. Then, when you were a little older, you made a picture of me, as you saw me in the village church; and, though the picture was rude, the likeness was apparent. Your mother showed me the picture, and I was determined to educate you. Your father objected, but fortunately he went away at length, and I indulged in my desire. How strange it seems," she added, musingly, "that when I so longed to make my son an artist he should not be able to comprehend its simplest principles, while the son of his nurse was gifted with genius as a painter!"

How Rosenbury's eyes glared at that moment through the keyhole.

The listener trembled all over. It seemed to him that her ladyship was on the verge of a great discovery—a discovery that would bring to him misery and degradation.

"It does seem singular," said Walter. "But Lord Rosenbury has something better than genius—a good and noble heart!"

Lady Rosenbury's lips involuntarily curled. No one knew better than she the shallowness of the heart Walter extolled, yet even she could have no idea of Rosenbury's real character, of what he would do to keep his present position—even had she known that position to be false.

Her ladyship had too much pride to betray the faintest of her supposed son, even to Walter, and she answered—

"I am glad you think so. But it seems to me that you and Raymond have long been at variance. What has he done to make you think him noble-hearted?"

"He met me on my arrival home, and begged me to be friendly with him, your ladyship, and he gave me the kindest sympathy! And to-day he came to me, offering to give me a thousand a year if I would go to Egypt and paint pictures for him. As he cares so little for art, I know he must have made the offer from pure benevolence."

"How strange!" exclaimed her ladyship. "Of course, you refused the offer?"

"Of course, my lady. It had no temptation for me. But it was very kind of him, was it not?"

Lady Rosenbury was thoughtful, asking herself what could have been Rosenbury's motive in thus wishing to get rid of Walter. That the offer originated in pure benevolence she did not for a moment believe.

"I can't understand it!" she said at length. "However, I dare say it's all right. I want to tell you how grieved I was that I should have been absent from Rosenbury when your poor mother died. I would have given much to have seen her. Marsha says that she kept calling for you and me and Raymond, saying that she could not die until she had seen one of us. Raymond went to her, but all she wanted was to commend you to our care. Still, I wish I could have seen her!"

Walter arose and walked to the French window, to hide his sudden emotion.

As he stood against the light, and very near to Lord Rosenbury's picture, her ladyship became suddenly and painfully agitated.

"How much you remind me of my late husband!" she exclaimed, her face paling. "As you stand there, you look as he did in his youth! What a singular and striking likeness! How singular that I never noticed it so strongly before!"

Her agitation touched Walter, and he came forward and sat upon a stool at her feet, looking affectionately and tenderly up into her face.

Her ladyship soon conquered her emotion, and laid her hand upon Walter's soft, fair hair with a caressing movement, as she said—

"It was very foolish of me just now to be so startled! Likenesses between strangers are not uncommon. But your likeness to my dear husband will always be a tie between us. I know now why I have felt so strong an interest in you. It is because you look as he did!"

Walter made no reply, but gave himself up to the blissful sensations of the moment. To feel her ladyship's hand upon his hair thrilled him with strange emotions, and after a while he whispered, tearfully—

"Oh, if your ladyship had only been my mother!"

Answering tears sprang to the lady's eyes, and she said—

"I wish I had been, Walter. I should have been proud of you! But it is best not to indulge in dreams like these. Let us talk of reality—of what is! I was pained to learn how unreconciled you were to your poor mother's death—what a sad blow it has proved to you! I know that you loved her with a more than filial love; but is it not more Christian-like to bear the blow with meekness?"

Walter looked up in astonishment.

"I am not unreconciled to my mother's death," he said, and his tone bore witness to his words. "As to my more than filial love for her, dear Lady Rosenbury, alas! it is not true! I did not love my poor mother half enough!"

"But Raymond told me how hard the stroke was for to bear!"

Walter was surprised. Remembering his confessions to Rosenbury, he thought it very singular that his lordship should have represented his feelings so differently from the truth. But Walter was honest and unswerving, and he soon decided that Rosenbury might have forgotten what he had said, or he disposed to conceal it as a fault.

He explained his real feelings to Lady Rosenbury, who was wise enough to understand them.

"I see how it was," she said, tenderly. "You were like an eagle in a dove's nest. You had been away from home so much, had mingled with the great world, and seen so much of life, that you had in a measure lost your old sympathies. Such a result could have been foreseen, and was to have been expected. You are not to blame. Dismiss all morbid grief on the subject, and look at the bright side. Your mother never suspected but that your love for her was as strong as hers for you. She loved you to the last, and died with your name upon her lips. Let these thoughts console you. He who has done wrong should alone cherish remorse!"

With wise counsels like these, her ladyship succeeded in banishing Walter's gloom, and recalling his old peaceful and happy expression.

Had Lady Rosenbury known the relationship existing between her and the young artist, she could scarcely have been tenderer or more loving to him. He had been a great favorite with the late Lord Rosenbury, and as such, as well as for his moral worth and his genius, she loved him.

And then, too, women are never insensible to the charms of beauty, and Walter was magnificently endowed in that respect. And his manner was always so respectful and

so gentle, his smile was always so winning and pleasant, and it was easy to see that he regarded her ladyship as his guardian angel.

There was a stronger reason than all the rest why Lady Rosenbury loved Walter, but the reason was unknown to herself. It was because Nature had established a bond between them!

Lady Rosenbury looked into his eyes, almost fancying that they were the same eyes that had looked love into her own in her youth—they were so very like.

"My dear Walter," she said, after a pause, "tell me all your plans for the future, as you have been wont to do? Will your mother's death make any difference in your mode of life?"

"None whatever, dear Lady Rosenbury," replied Walter. "I shall go on painting and studying my art."

"That is right. Still you will be lonely, my dear boy. You will have no country cottage to run down to when tired of busy London, and your chambers, pleasant as they are, can never be a real home to you. I have no fears that you will ever yield to the temptations of a town life and become dissipated. I know your manly principles too well for that. But you have a warm, noble heart, and should have a pleasant home of your own. In short, Walter, I think you ought to marry!"

"To marry!" repeated the artist, his face paling.

"Yes, to marry! Of course, you will always be welcome at Rosenbury House while I live for, as you know, I take great interest in you; but you tie yourself so closely to art that such visits must necessarily be few. Why not have a home and hearth of your own, and a wife to share your joys and sorrows, and sympathise with your aspirations?"

For a moment Walter's face was convulsed with emotion; then he answered, huskily,—

"Dear Lady Rosenbury, I—I shall never marry!"

"Never marry!" exclaimed her ladyship. "What a resolution to make at twenty-three! Never marry? Do you know what such a resolution implies? Think of going through life without a home, without a heart that beats alone for you!"

"I have thought of all that, dear Lady Rosenbury," responded Walter, shading his face with his hands. "I must be sufficient unto myself. But I shall not be alone while your ladyship lives. I shall always have a friend and counsellor in you, shall I not?"

Her ladyship assented, and looked at the youth in thoughtful silence.

Suddenly, with a gentle movement, she drew Walter towards her, and looked into his eyes as though she would read his heart.

"You have already loved then, my poor boy?" she said, reading aright his emotions. "I never suspected it before. Have you been rejected?"

Walter shook his head.

Rosenbury, who was watching the scene with intense interest through the keyhole, quickened his hearing, in order to lose nothing of what Walter might say.

"My dear boy," said her ladyship, in a tone and manner of ineffable tenderness, "I love you as though you were my own son?"

She paused, her voice faltering, as she reflected that she did, indeed, love Walter a thousand times better than Raymond, and then she continued,—

"Confide in me, then, as in a mother. If you have not been rejected, why do you say that you will never marry? Is the lady not worthy of you?"

"Worthy?" cried Walter with sudden enthusiasm. "Oh, dear Lady Rosenbury, she is as far above me as the sun is above the earth! She is the most glorious, the most lovely, the most beautiful of women! She is like you!"

Lady Rosenbury smiled and sighed.

"You speak like a lover," she said, "and yet you finish by saying she is like me!"

"She is, dear lady. I think I loved her first because she reminded me of you. She could not be perfect unless she resembled you!"

"Flatterer!" said the lady, with pretended severity, yet secretly pleased and charmed at the earnest homage rendered her by her young protégé. "Who is the lady of your love?"

The glow faded from Walter's cheek, and the enthusiasm from his manner. The question seemed to recall him to the fact there was an immeasurable distance between the object of his love and himself.

"She is the Lady Geraldine Summers," he replied, in a low tone, "niece of the Earl of Montford!"

Her ladyship started.

"You love the Lady Geraldine?" she exclaimed. "Yet it is not strange. Your description of her was not far wrong, my dear boy. Does she know that you love her?"

Walter shook his head.

"How could I tell her that her portrait-painter had dared to fall in love with her?" he asked. "She would have smiled at my presumption, or pitied me that I dared look so high above my 'station'."

"Do you know," asked her ladyship, "that you have a rival in Lord Rosenbury? He aspires to the hand of the Lady Geraldine!"

Walter groaned.

"It is not likely you to give it up in this manner, my dear boy," said Lady Rosenbury, tenderly. "If you love her so much, why not tell her so?"

"Your ladyship forgets that I am but the son of your servant, and that the Earl of Montford would regard me as such, even if the Lady Geraldine did not! I have no hopes—I can have none! Besides, if there were not such a gulf between us, I could never be a rival to your son, dear Lady Rosenbury!"

Her ladyship made some efforts to combat this resolution, but in vain.

At length she said,—

"You are aware, Walter, that I have a very large fortune of my own, besides my very handsome marriage settlements. These are all at my absolute disposal. I have long intended to care for you. Raymond has enough without it. I can settle a handsome sum upon you on your marriage-day, a sum even worthy the consideration of the Earl of Montford. You shall enter the lists with Lord Rosenbury, and Geraldine shall choose between you."

Walter expressed his earnest gratitude for her ladyship's unexampled generosity, and added,—

"But I cannot accept it. No fortune however great, could atone to the Earl for my want of birth. He even regards me now as stepping beyond my rightful position in becoming an artist! No, dear Lady Rosenbury, I will go on as I am doing and the Lady Geraldine shall never know of my presumption!"

Lady Rosenbury could not help feeling an increased respect for the young artist as she listened to this resolution and looked upon his heroic face. She felt convinced that he looked upon the matter in the right light, yet she could not avoid thinking what a noble pair Geraldine and Walter would have made, and how exactly they were fitted for each other.

They conversed some time longer, but were at last aroused by the summons to dinner. Rosenbury crept away from the keyhole just in time, and joined them at the table.

Walter spent the night at Rosenbury House, and went to town with Lady and Lord Rosenbury in the morning, returning with a heavy heart to his pleasant chambers and his profession.

CHAPTER IX.

Rise from thy scorching den, thou soul of mischief!
My blood boils hotter than the poisoned flesh
Of Hercules clothed in the Centaur's shirt.
Swell me, courage!

—*Ravelin's Rebellion.*

It was the morning after the ball.

The Lady Geraldine Summers was seated

in a pretty morning room at her uncle's residence.

If she had been dazzlingly beautiful the evening previous, she was not less lovely now. There was not a trace of fatigue or sleepiness upon her bright young face, not a particle of lassitude or languor in her manner. Her dusky hair was smoothed away from her brows in such a way as to fully reveal the lovely contour of her features, and a single curl strayed over her shoulder.

She was dressed in a morning robe of white, confined at the waist by a scarlet sash, which floated behind her, nearly reaching the floor when she stood erect.

As she sat there with folded hands, she seemed absorbed in thought. The expression of her countenance kept constantly changing. Sometimes she smiled, but the smile faded into a look of sadness, to be succeeded by another curving of her delicate mouth.

Evidently, she was reviewing the events of the previous evening.

In the midst of her reverie the door opened, and Lord Rosenbury was announced.

The Lady Geraldine rose to receive him.

Rosenbury bowed low over the little hand extended to him, and it may have been that he favoured it with a gentle pressure, for there was a flush on the maiden's cheeks as she withdrew it from his clasp.

"May I hope that the Lady Geraldine missed me from her brilliant assembly last evening?" he asked, as she resumed her seat, and he took a chair near her.

"My uncle was much disappointed in not seeing Lord Rosenbury," returned the Lady Geraldine, evasively. "You were detained by domestic afflictions?"

"Not exactly," replied Rosenbury, twirling his whiskers absently. "My nurse died the other day, and was buried yesterday—only my nurse, you know. I remained at Rosenbury to attend the funeral, which took place yesterday, and also to comfort her bereaved son."

"That son is Mr. Lorraine, the painter, is he not?"

"Yes—poor fellow! He is quite alone now, but he has a friend in me."

"He has had a sad loss," remarked the maiden. "Has it proved a great blow to him?"

"I believe so," was the reply. "But he is already beginning to recover from it. You are very kind to inquire after him. Among all my humble friends there is not one whom I like so well as Walter Lorraine, the son of my old nurse."

Rosenbury's last sentence was rather offensive to Lady Geraldine, but the tone in which it was uttered grated still more upon her hearing. Her cheek was slightly flushed as she responded,—

"And among all my equals, Lord Rosenbury, there is not one I esteem and respect more than Mr. Lorraine, the distinguished artist!"

Rosenbury bit his lips, as was his habit when annoyed, but he concealed his chagrin by a smile, and said,—

"You are very kind to Walter, Lady Geraldine, and as his friend I thank you for your able championship of his cause. Does the Earl share your sentiments towards Mr. Lorraine?"

"Really, my lord, I do not know. We have never conversed about him."

There was a slight hauteur in the lady's manner that warned Rosenbury that he was treading upon forbidden ground, and he carelessly changed the subject by remarking,—

"Dear Lady Geraldine, I did not come here this morning to provoke your championship of my friend, nor to make my excuses for the absence of last evening. I have something of importance to say to you!"

The colour fluttered in and out of the maiden's cheeks, as if she knew or guessed what the communication was to be, but she made no reply.

In her brilliant career as a belle, Geraldine

Summers had received many offers of marriage, although she had been no coquette, and by this time she was well versed in the signs that usually preceded a formal declaration of love.

If Rosenbury had been less absorbed in himself he could not have failed to notice the lack of encouragement in the maiden's face and manner, but as it was he did not notice it.

After a moment spent in endeavouring to recollect the speech he had framed in his mind before coming, Rosenbury said,—

"You must have noticed, my dear Lady Geraldine, that I have been very attentive to you of late, and have been a frequent visitor at your house. With a woman's quick intuition, you have, perhaps, already guessed the reason, and my secret may be to you no secret, but a plain revelation!"

He paused to give his words the benefit of an impressive silence, and to derive some encouragement from the maiden's looks.

Her face was strangely cold and impassive, and her gaze was bent upon the floor.

After a little, he resumed,—

"Since you first dawned upon my vision, Geraldine, I have loved you. I know of no one who can compare with you in any respect, and I offer you my hand and heart, hoping that they may meet with your gracious acceptance. The name of Rosenbury will shine with new lustre if you will condescend to wear it!"

"I have listened to you, my lord," responded Geraldine, in low, clear, tones, "because I was bound by a promise to do so. My uncle forewarned that you would honour me by this proposal, and exacted from me a promise to listen to it. Otherwise, I should have found means to avoid it. I am conscious of the great honour you would do to me, but I cannot reciprocate your sentiments, and must therefore decline your kind and flattering offer!"

Rosenbury flushed with rage, but he managed to control it, as he exclaimed,—

"Will you not take time to consider the subject, Geraldine? Weeks—even months—"

"No period of time, however long, would make me change my decision, my lord!"

"Allow me to ask, Lady Geraldine, if you look higher than me? Perhaps you will marry your old admirer, the Duke?"

"I overlook your words and manner, my lord," said the maiden, with considerable hauteur, "in consideration of the pain I have given you. I shall not marry the Duke to whom you refer. As to looking higher than you, there is no name in the peerage more honourable than that of Rosenbury. The Rosenburys are an ancient and noble race, and no one appreciates their record more than myself!"

A week before, that compliment would have gratified and inflated Rosenbury. Now it fell unheeded upon his senses, or served only to remind him that Nature had not included him in that honoured family.

(To be continued.)

A BEAUTIFUL CLAIMANT.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mrs THORNTON was dead!

It came on Claude Maitland with a thrill of horror. The gentle, kindly lady who had never spoken an unfriendly word to him—the loving, tender mother, who had told him only a few hours before she was glad he had won her child's heart, and blessed them both. Well, he should never hear her voice again. There was a genuine sorrow at his heart. He grieved for his own sake and Kitty's, but he had a stronger feeling even than sorrow—indignation.

Lucy Thornton had been a devoted wife and tender mother. For miles round her name was held in reverence; but she had not been

happy latterly. For the last month her home had been saddled with a stranger who openly delighted her; and as she herself had confessed to him only the night before she felt in despair of getting rid of Marguerite Bovington, and breaking the spell she had cast over the Squire.

"Perhaps he will be sorry now," thought the young lawyer bitterly. "Perhaps he will understand now that his devotion to the impostor was a real cruelty to his wife. I wish I could go to The Sycamores. I long to be with Kitty, but I should not like a row with the Squire while his wife was lying dead. Oh, my poor little Kitty," and something like a sob escaped him, "we have both lost the best friend we ever had. Things will go hardly with you, dear, I fear, without your mother."

He could not eat any breakfast. Before he had rung to order away the untasted meal Mary opened the door, and ushered in, unceremoniously, the Vicar.

"This is awful news, Maitland," said Dr. Bolton, kindly. "I am just going up to The Sycamores; and, knowing you don't visit there just now, I thought you'd like me to take a message to Miss Thornton."

Claude wrung his old friend's hand.

"That is good of you. Do you know I was thinking of calling and risking the being refused admission; but if you will take my message that will be better. Do you know what killed Mrs. Thornton? I saw her myself last night, and she was quite well then, though certainly in very low spirits."

The Vicar stared.

"Haven't you heard?" he asked in a solemn tone. "She was murdered!"

"Impossible!"

"So I should have said. Poor Mrs. Thornton had not an enemy in the world, and yet she was cruelly done to death within a mile of her home—actually murdered in cold blood on her husband's land."

"Who did it? I have heard nothing."

"It must have been poachers," said the Vicar, decidedly. "Though I shall always believe the blow was not meant for her. The pistol was picked up at a short distance, and is in the hands of the police."

"I don't think poachers usually carry pistols," objected Claude; "and last night was not one they would be likely to be abroad early, seeing it was as light as day till one o'clock, owing to the full moon."

"It seems, from what the groom says, Mrs. Thornton ordered the carriage quite late, and drove into Bovington, a thing she had never done before after dark."

"She came here," said Claude, frankly. "I don't know whether there will be any inquiry about it, but I would rather you should know all I can tell. Mrs. Thornton came to me in sore distress. She said her husband was completely infatuated with Marguerite Bovington, and—"

"With the girl who claims to be Miss Bovington!" corrected the Vicar, mildly.

"Just so. Mrs. Thornton said she and her daughter were simply nonentities in their own home, and begged me to tell her if there was no way of ridding them of their unwelcome guest. I suggested Mrs. Thornton and her daughter should go on a long visit to some relations, when Miss Bovington, of course, could not remain at The Sycamores in their absence. She seemed quite pleased at the idea, and became much more cheerful."

"But you said she was in low spirits?"

"Undoubtedly. She told me this in confidence, Vicar. She was troubled about her son. It is the Squire's great wish that Vere should marry Miss Bovington, and his mother said she would rather see him in his grave. She said good-bye to me very kindly, and told me she was glad I was to have Kitty. It struck me at the time her manner was rather solemn; but I explained it to myself by thinking if she really lets home it might be some months before we met again."

"Well, it is a bad piece of business. I must

be going now, Maitland. What message shall I take for you?"

"Give my dear love to Kitty, and ask her to tell me how I can see her."

The Vicar smiled good-temperedly. In common with most people who knew of Miss Thornton's engagement, his sympathy was entirely with the lovers. In fact, he had as good as told the Squire so.

"Look here, Maitland! It seems wrong for a man of my years to countenance rebellion; but I've known you from a boy, and I am nearly as fond of Kitty Thornton as though she were a child of my own. If you can't manage a meeting any other way, and she wishes for one, I think well let you use the Vicarage."

He drove quickly to The Sycamores. Truth to say, Dr. Bolton shrank from the task before him. A good man and a kind one, he had for years been so absorbed in his poor people and his books that to take an active part in worldly matters came difficult to him.

Once roused to action his judgment was clear and prompt as witness his refusal to recognise the African traveller as Rebecca Bovington's heiress; but he hated interference of all kinds.

He had, moreover, very strong feelings. He was thoroughly indignant with the Squire for his conduct during the last few months, and yet he was conscious that, with Mrs. Thornton lying dead in the house, it was no time to remonstrate with her husband.

Every blind was lowered. The shadow of trouble rested on the house. Mrs. Thornton's favourite dog came to meet the Vicar, whining sadly, as though to ask him to restore his mistress, and when Jenkins opened the door he looked pale and grief-stricken.

"I thought you would come soon, sir," he said, respectfully. "I am thankful to see you."

He looked so mysterious and so doubtful what to do with the visitor that Dr. Bolton said, quietly,—

"Just let me have a talk with you Jenkins, and hear anything you can tell me, if the Squire and Miss Kathleen are too upset to see me. I did not expect they would care to be disturbed, but somehow I could not stay away as such a time, knowing, too, that Mr. Vere was abroad."

"If you'd step in here, sir," and Jenkins led the way respectfully to a tiny room at the end of the hall, where, in brighter times Kitty had been used to see the poor pensioners.

He closed the door with a troubled look, and then turned appealingly to the Vicar, as though asking him to speak.

It was characteristic of Dr. Bolton that, though visionary and absent-minded in everyday life, in times of real trouble and need he was always ready, and proved himself possessed of practical common sense, and almost womanly gentleness.

"My poor fellow," he said, kindly, "it's a terrible thing to have one you loved cut off so suddenly. I know I feel as though I had lost one of my own flesh and blood; but your mistress was a good woman, Jenkins, if ever there was one, and that must be one comfort."

"Sir," said the butler, solemnly, "you'll keep to that, won't you? You'll not let them talk you into slandering my dear dead lady. You'll not let that she-fend upstairs break Miss Kathleen's heart by speaking ill of her mother?"

To say that the Vicar was surprised is to put it far too mildly. His first idea was that Jenkins was drunk, but another look at the pale, troubled face undeceived him.

"Speak plainly," he commanded. "It is best for us all. Just tell me what you mean, Jenkins; and just remember, please, I'd as soon hear anyone slander my own wife as Mrs. Thornton!"

Jenkins bowed his head approvingly.

"Sir, when we found the mistress last night lying still and cold—done to death, so to say, at our doors—I thought things were bad enough;

but there's fresh trouble now. That woman—Miss Bovington—she's actually daring to say it was not murder, but suicide. She hints the mistress was strange in her ways for some days past, and that she took her own life while temporarily insane."

Dr. Bolton's indignation fully equalled Jenkins's desire. He brought down his clenched fist with a bang on the table. His face was pale with anger, and he did not stop to choose his words.

"It's an abominable lie!"

"Of course it is, sir," said the butler; "but the worst of it is, the master's taken it up, and seems to believe it!"

"He couldn't!"

"He does, sir!" returned the butler, mournfully. "At first he was quite broken down with grief, and vowed vengeance against his wife's murderers; but this morning he saw him and heard about it, and she contrived to put this hateful thought into his head, and, what is worse, to make it seem plausible."

"Just tell me her arguments," said the Vicar, gravely. "I only hope Miss Kitty has not heard them?"

"She has, sir. She just went out of the room saying she'd not stay to hear her mother slandered. Miss Bovington declares that to drive alone in the dark on a March evening without an object was the act of a madwoman, and that Mrs. Thornton took the pistol with her, and meant to kill herself before she came home."

The Vicar's face cleared.

"I can disprove that, Jenkins. Your mistress had a long conversation with Mr. Claude Maitland at his own house. She was there, I believe, nearly an hour, and she distinctly told him she intended to leave The Sycamore, on a visit to her brother, and take Miss Thornton with her."

"Are you sure, Vicar?"

"I am so sure that I have just come from Mr. Maitland, and I heard the story from him."

Tears of relief stood in the butler's eyes.

"They ought to believe you," he said, eagerly; "but that anyone should dare to say the mistress committed suicide makes me feel ready to knock them down."

They were interrupted. The door opened noiselessly, and Miss Bovington entered. She gave the Vicar a chilly little bow (she had never forgiven him for doubting her claims to Bovington Manor), and then turned sharply to the butler.

"Your master has rung twice, Jenkins. He wants to know why you are neglecting your duties while the family are in such trouble?"

Jenkins took no more notice of the reproach than if it had not been spoken.

"Should you like to see the Squire, Dr. Bolton? If so, I will ask him if he can receive you."

"Tell him I am here," returned the Vicar; "and, Jenkins, send word to Miss Thornton I should very much like to speak to her."

Left alone with the woman he detested, if such a kindly-natured man could be said to detest anyone, Dr. Bolton sat down in a low chair, and relapsed into silence. He was a clever man, and he was quite aware that to get at Miss Bovington's intentions it was far better to force her to speak first. If she really wished to impress upon people that poor Lucy Thornton had committed suicide, she would soon show her hand. He was right.

"This is a terrible occurrence!" she began.

"It is always terrible when murder is committed," replied the Vicar, "and I know of no one more likely to be deeply mourned than Mrs. Thornton. The loss to her family is irreparable; but to herself the change must be a gain, since she had long since prepared for a better home."

Miss Bovington smiled scornfully.

"I don't understand such things. I don't go in for being religious; but I never heard before suicides were fit for Heaven!"

"That has nothing to do with Mrs. Thornton."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"The inquest opens this morning at twelve. I fancy you will find then that the law of England calls self-inflicted death—suicide."

He looked at her keenly.

"I fancy you are not a woman to do anything without an object," he said, bluntly. "Now, what is your object in fixing such a cruel charge on my dead friend? She never injured you. Her house was opened to you warmly, as though you had been a chosen friend. I am positive she never spoke an unkind word to you."

"She would not have dared! Squire Thornton is an English gentleman, and would know how to protect his guests."

"I rather fancied an English gentleman's first duty was to his wife! From the first day of your coming to this house you have tried to mar the peace of it. You have treated Mrs. Thornton and her daughter with the most insulting contempt. Now, what had you to gain by it? These ladies had nothing to do with your claims to the Manor. Had Mrs. Thornton loved you as a daughter she could not have helped a little to make the law pronounce you Rebecca Bovington's heiress. If you wanted to punish anyone for the delay in settling your identity, I was the person to attack, not two defenceless women."

Her lip curled.

"I never forgive a slight," she said, bitterly.

"Mrs. Thornton and her daughter showed me pretty plainly I was an unwelcome guest, and so I thought they should repeat their inhospitality. But here comes the venerable Jenkins!"

"My master will see you, sir!" he said, gravely. Then, as Dr. Bolton followed, the butler whispered, "Miss Kitty's in the old schoolroom, and she wants you to go to her there!"

It struck Dr. Bolton that the bereaved widower felt his loss less than anyone would have expected; but he was a charitable man, and guessed very likely the Squire was kept up by excitement, and had not yet had time to realise the blow that had befallen him.

He stayed ten minutes with his old friend, and when he left him it was with an intense desire—in spite of his profession, and his being by nature a man of peace—to knock down his old ally; for not only had James Thornton taken up the theory of suicide warmly, but he really seemed to prefer the idea to thinking his wife had been murdered.

"Why, if I thought we were liable to be killed just walking in our own grounds, I should never have an easy moment," he said, complainingly, when the Vicar disagreed with him. "I should never leave the house without feeling I might be murdered before I got back to it!"

"Better that than fix such a shadow on your wife's memory!"

"Poor Lucy!" and he sighed heavily enough. "I was very fond of her, and we spent many years happily together; but her mind had been giving way for weeks."

"I don't believe it!" said the Vicar flatly. "You did not see much of her," objected the Squire.

"I saw quite enough. No, Mr. Thornton, that your wife was unhappy—miserably unhappy, I may say—during the last week of her life, no one will deny; but her brain was as clear and her intellect as unclouded as my own."

The Squire shook his head.

"Lucy and I always thought alike till lately. Poor thing, I might have known, when she began to differ from me continually, the brain was tottering!"

"If everyone who differs from you must needs have a tottering brain, Squire, I'm afraid there are not many sane people in this neighbourhood. Mrs. Thornton gave way to all your whims until they affected her children. She did not like your preventing your

daughter from marrying a worthy young man who was devoted to her, and she was indignant at your scheme for uniting your son to a designing adventuress; but as for taking her life, I don't believe the idea of it ever entered her head."

"You will say next I did it!"

"No;" returned the Vicar, warmly, "I shall not. You made your poor wife miserable by your infatuation for an impostor; but I don't think you ever dreamed of hurting her!"

The Squire looked full into Dr. Bolton's face.

"Have you heard they found the pistol—the pistol that killed her?—and it was one of a couple I keep always in my own possession. I had them out of their case three days ago to clean them; and, by some awful mistake, forgot to lock them up again. Look here!" and he put a case into the Vicar's hands. "Open it, and judge for yourself!"

The case was evidently made for a brace of pistols, but only one was in its place.

Dr. Bolton took out the weapon, and recognised it at once as one of a pair that had been presented to the Squire a few years before. It bore his monogram and crest, and the date of the gift.

That anyone could have a pistol precisely like this, and bearing the same monogram and crest, seemed impossible.

The Vicar's judgment was prompt. Whoever murdered Mrs. Thornton had stolen one of her husband's pistols. The cruel deed was no rash act of peacemakers, but a deep-laid, premeditated crime.

"Squire," he cried, anxiously. "Try and look back carefully. On which day did you last actually see these two pistols in their case?"

"On Monday," replied Mr. Thornton, crossly. "It doesn't need much," looking back, "to tell that. I was out the whole of Tuesday, and yesterday I was writing letters the whole day. I put the pistols back into their case on Monday just before lunch, and I never looked at them again until the police-inspector came this morning, and told me my wife had actually been killed with firearms stolen from this house."

"Monday, at lunch time!" repeated the Vicar, thoughtfully; "and Mrs. Thornton was killed on Wednesday night. It will go hard with me if I do not find out who had access to this room between those times."

"You will find that no one ever comes into this room except members of my own family. Strangers are never shown here at all. It must have been a case of suicide."

And the Vicar, finding it impossible to change his old friend's opinion, left him with that desire, before alluded to, of wishing he could have tried summary force, so annoyed was he at Mr. Thornton's sentiments.

CHAPTER XIV.

"PLEASE take me away!"

These were the first words of poor Kathleen Thornton when she saw her old friend.

It was barely twelve hours since she had lost her mother; and yet the girl who, till lately, had been her father's darling—the bright, high-spirited daughter, who had once seemed far more to her father than to her gentle mother, was conscious of but one desire—to leave home!

"My poor child!" And the Vicar held her hand in deep sympathy. "I wish your brother was here!"

"I feel almost mad!" said Kathleen. "To have lost my mother after weeks of illness would have been hard enough; but to have been taken suddenly, without one farewell word, is terrible! And that is not the worst! Perhaps you have not heard?"

"My dear girl, I know everything. Jenkins gave me a hint, and I have seen your father."

"Did you try and make him think differently?"

"I talked till I lost all patience with him. It's a strange thing to say to you, Kitty; and, I suppose a wrong thing to feel, considering my years and sacred profession; but I longed to knock him down!"

Kitty did not reprove Dr. Bolton for his pugilistic sentiments. She pressed his hand, and looked piteously into his face, saying—

"Oh, dear Dr. Bolton, please take me away!"

"There is nothing, I should like better, child; and you know my wife would welcome you gladly. But what would your father say?"

Kitty sighed.

"Do you know the inquest opens at twelve?"

Dr. Bolton, will you go?"

"I will be there, dear!" he said, soothingly, "but I believe it will only be a matter of force to-day. I don't think they can take any evidence till to-morrow; and now, child, I have a message for you. Claude Maitland sent you his dear love, and wants to know how and where he can see you? He was almost the last person who spoke to your mother; and though I know the Squire declares there is no engagement whatever between you, we, all of us, believe otherwise; so, Kitty, if you will name the time, I think you had better see Mr. Maitland at the Vicarage. Depend upon it, my dear, your unwelcome guest will try, and make mischief between you and the Squire, and there will be less food for her malice if you see your lover at our house."

Kitty thanked him.

"I will come to-night," she said, gravely, "after dark. I don't think I could bear to be alone here then!"

"And you are not afraid?" asked the Vicar, quietly. "You do not mind going through the grounds alone, after last night?"

"No one will hurt me!"

"They hurt your mother!"

Kitty looked straight into his face.

"Dr. Bolton, it was not poachers who killed mamma. She was murdered in cold blood and malice for some object which I cannot even guess. If the same person wishes my death, now, depend upon it, they will compass it, even if I never left this house."

"Kitty!" the Vicar's tone was almost breathless. "Surely you have not any suspicion?"

"I have!"

"But who?"

Terrified, she looked round the room as though afraid the walls might hear her, and whisper her secret.

"Miss Bovington!"

"Good Heaven! But, child, it is impossible. She could not have committed murder!"

"I do not say she did it herself," said Kitty, slowly. "I believe she stole the pistol, and caused the murder to be done. More I cannot guess. I know she (as had better not use names) disappeared with my father, and was with him for some time after in the drawing-room. I had been lying down with a bad headache. I left my room at nine o'clock. I heard the house-chime as I went downstairs, and on my way down I met Miss Bovington going upstairs to write letters. My mother left the South Lodge at half-past eight. We found her at eleven, and the doctor says she had been dead an hour and a-half longer. So you see it seems impossible if the murder was committed at half-past nine or earlier than that; she died; but she also instigated it! I am positive!"

"My dear!" said the Vicar, gravely, "I would try to argue with you. I like this woman quite antipathetic to you; but I can't see (even admitting she was wicked enough to instigate her son to murder) her object in killing Mrs. Thornton."

"I look here," said Kitty, putting one hand on her heart. "The first time I ever saw the face of Margaret Bovington seemed to me to show a world worse than some terrible sorrow. On Dr. Bolton, how can I go on living in the same house with her—breaking bread with her, when I know she has killed my mother?"

Jenkins knocked at the door. A message

had arrived, postponing the inquest until the following day. It would take place at the "Bovington Arms," and was to open at ten o'clock. Jenkins, who was loyal to his young lady, had thought she should have the first news.

"Have you told papa?"

"I'm going to him now, Miss Kathleen. He's in the study, and that—that Miss Bovington is with him!" The pause was caused by Jenkins having to struggle with himself before he substituted a milder phrase for "that crocodile," which had been his original thought.

The Vicar rose to go. He had been at The Sycamore nearly three hours; but he would have stayed twice that time could he have helped Kathleen.

He rose chiefly because it was getting near lunch time; and as he had combated the insinuations of Margaret Bovington, there was a nameless prejudice in his heart against sitting down to a meal with her.

"I shall tell my wife you will come to see her to-night, Kitty," he said, kindly, "Jenkins," to the butler, who waited to show him out, "I have asked your young lady to spend an hour or so with us to-night. She ought not to be alone here. Will you see that one of the servants attends her to the Vicarage?"

"I'll come myself, your reverence," was Jenkins' prompt reply.

Kathleen sat alone in the deserted school-room; the butler had served her lunch there, and her faithful maid sat by her, and tried to persuade her to eat. But it was of no use; a glass of wine and a biscuit were all she could swallow. She waved away the other things impatiently, and the maid herself carried them away.

"Try and sleep, Miss Kitty," she pleaded, affectionately. "Indeed, you look worn out, and the mistress, Heaven bless her, would have been the first to get you to take care of yourself."

Kitty sighed. She sank back on the sofa, and suffered Paoletto to cover her with a soft silk rug. The maid lingered, reluctantly.

"I wish you would go to bed, Miss Kitty," she suggested, respectfully. "You'd rest better there."

"I cannot go," answered Kitty. "I seem to feel I must be at hand in case anything fresh is found out. If I went upstairs I should make my brain ache by fanning myself, and that I was wanted by papa."

Paoletto withdrew. Old and faithful servants as she was, she could not bring herself to suggest to her young lady that in her own room she would have been safer from the chance of seeing Miss Bovington. These two had not met since the night before.

Strong servants as the house was far from that the stranger had usurped Kathleen's rightful place as her father's companion and confidante, while her elder of these dead mistress had made them her avowed foes. Not one in the large establishment but what would have enjoyed giving Miss Bovington a "setting down," as they expressed it.

Race went straight to the butler.

"I can't get Miss Kathleen to go to bed. She's lying down in the schoolroom. I shouldn't think that Vice would have the wickedness to disturb her there."

"She's had enough for anything," said Jenkins; "but don't you worry, Race. If they're to stay in the same house they must meet some time. I'd rather myself it was soon."

Miss Kitty can't feel more miserable than she does already; and if Miss Bovington forgets the respect due to her, it might give the poor dear young lady a chance of escape. She'd be happier, far, and more at peace away from The Sycamore if that creature is to stay here, and order everyone about."

Kathleen had declared sleep impossible, but after Paoletto's physical fatigue began to assert itself. She had spent a night of mental grief and anxiety, her mind had been on the stretch all day.

The perfect quiet of the room, the soft

warmth of the wood fire, lulled her into a kind of fatal slumber.

It was more like dosing than refreshing sleep; but it was better, at any rate, than the terrible wakefulness which had gone before.

Suddenly she opened her eyes, and saw that she was no longer alone. Margaret Bovington, dressed in a soft black cashmere, sat in a low chair by the sofa. She might have been there five minutes or an hour. It was impossible to say which.

Kathleen started up in horror as she met the mocking gaze of her beautiful eyes.

"I thought I should, at least, be secure from intrusion here," said Miss Thornton, coldly; "but as I find I was mistaken I will go to my own room!"

"You had better stay here."

The voice was low and thrilling. Miss Bovington adroitly moved her chair, so as to place herself between Kathleen and the door, observing, in the same tone—

"I wish to speak to you."

"I desire no conversation with you!" returned Kathleen, bitterly. "Let me pass, if you please!"

"I shall not! Has your mother's malady already infected you, Miss Thornton, that you are behaving in such an extraordinary manner towards your father's guest?"

"Leave my mother's name alone. You are not worthy to take it on your lips!" replied Kitty, recasting herself upon the sofa—not because she was conquered by her foe, but for the simple reason that her trembling knees refused to support her standing.

"We had better understand each other plainly," said Miss Bovington, coolly. "First I have to tell you that the Squire has begged me to remain here until he feels equal himself to go away for change of scene. He is kind enough to say that he values my poor companionship and efforts to assuage his grief, and that he shrinks from being left alone with his headstrong, rebellious daughter!"

Throbbing though her head was with pain, Kathleen made a brief calculation. She believed Vera was on his way home, since his last letter had announced his return to Cape Town, where, in a few days after writing, he would receive her and appeal.

If her brother started at once, as she hoped he had already left Africa, he would be at Plymouth either early in next week or the one after.

As weeks she would only have to endure her troubles alone for ten days. At best, Vera would be with her in four. This thought gave her courage.

"What my father has arranged with you I neither know nor care," she said, coldly. "While you remain in this house, I shall keep to this room and my own bedroom. Between you and me friendship is impossible; and if I am to remember you are our guest, it must be by not seeing you!"

"What is your objection to me?" demanded Margaret, coldly. "Are you disappointed because, through my arrival in Yorkshire your brother will not become Rebecca Bovington's heir? It seems to me that Mr. Vera Thornton has already the prospect of an ample fortune, unless he displeases his father!"

The emphasis on the last words was terrible. It darted across Kathleen's mind that her father's property was not untitled; and if this were chosen to work upon his infatuation, what would happen? Kitty knew her mother's money, at least, was safe.

One thing had been settled on Vera, so that he required the interest yearly, and the principal would go to his children at his death. Another thing would go to Kitty herself, provided she married with her parents' consent. Meanwhile it and the remainder of Mrs. Thornton's property was in the hands of trustees, who paid her the interest yearly.

If Margaret Bovington had designs on the Squire's property, he could leave her. The Sycamore and every penny of his own fortune.

He could not leave her one penny of his



[KATHLEEN STARTED UP IN HORROR AS SHE MET THE MOCKING GAZE OF MARGUERITE BOVINGTON'S EYES.]

wife's; but if he chose he could retain the interest of two-thirds of it for his lifetime. At any rate Vere had four hundred a-year. That much was safe.

For herself Kitty cared nothing. She knew that Claude Maitland would welcome her to his heart if she brought him not a silver sixpence. At last, seeing Miss Bovington seemed to expect an answer, she said, gravely,—

"I cannot tell you why I dislike you. If you received every penny of Miss Bovington's property to-morrow I should not mind. I never wanted it for Vere. He never wanted it for himself."

"How disinterested! Perhaps you would be so glad to see The Sycamores free of me, that you would not mind my enjoying the Manor, and that accounts for your generosity?"

Kathleen never denied the charge.

"I am very tired," she said, wearily, "and even you will admit I have gone through enough to try me. I should be glad to be alone."

"Presently," returned her tormentor, quietly. "We had better understand each other first. I believe Mr. Vere Thornton is on his way to England. Is it your intention to try to poison his mind against me?"

"You do not know my brother. Vere is so innately just that if he recognises you as Marguerite Bovington he would say so, even though you were his most bitter enemy."

"Which I am not."

"You have seen my brother," said Kathleen, simply. "You may not remember him, but I know your face made no common impression on his fancy. When Vere comes home, Miss Bovington, if you are indeed the girl he met on that moonlight night at Basfontaine, believe me he will say so, even though it cost him a fortune ten times the value of the one you claim."

Marguerite looked at her searchingly.

"It is absurd that my prospects should rest just on the chance of a young man's recalling a face which he saw once for perhaps

three minutes! I produce the certificate of my own birth and my parents' marriage. I can show at least a dozen letters written to me by my father, Walter Bovington. It is absurd all these should go for nothing, and my wealth or poverty be at Mr. Vere Thornton's decision."

"You need not have it so," said Kathleen, gravely. "As I told my father last night, you have no real need to await my brother's return. His friend Kenneth Martin, who was with him at Basfontaine, is now in London. He would come here in a day if sent for."

"And if I refuse to accept such interested testimony—what then?"

"I suppose you have only to bring forward someone who knew you in Africa for the Marguerite Bovington described in the certificates and papers? That is where the difficulty lies. Dr. Bolton is a cautious man. He would not naturally like to pay over a large fortune unless he were convinced beyond all doubt the recipient was the rightful heiress!"

"Ah!" said Marguerite, as she paused, "you have not answered my question? Is it war or peace between us? Do you mean to speak against me to your brother, and persuade him over to your views?"

"I shall not even speak to Vere of the matter of your identity. I shall tell him (and remember, please, you have forced this from me) of the misery you have wrought in our home, and of my earnest wish that you should leave it."

"The Sycamores does not belong to your brother yet," said Marguerite, with a scornful laugh. "Then," as she moved her chair, and so freed Kitty's passage, "you can go now. You have told me all I want to know."

At seven o'clock Kathleen Norman left The Sycamores to go to the Vicarage. Jenkins would gladly have accompanied her, but the Squire had fixed the dinner hour for seven.

Pace begged to walk with her young lady, but Kathleen refused. She knew perfectly

that her father's anger would fall heavily on anyone who aided in her stolen meeting with her lover, and she did not wish to bring the faithful maid into trouble.

Just as the Squire was sitting down to dinner his daughter walked fearlessly through the hall out into the grounds. And then the mystery began.

Claude Maitland waited at the Vicarage till midnight, but his fiancée never arrived.

Dr. Bolton was interrupted at his breakfast the next morning by poor Jenkins, who came to implore his aid.

Miss Thornton had left her home the evening before at seven o'clock. She had never since returned to it, and both lodge-keepers declared positively she had never passed through the gates.

The Vicar sent off a messenger for Claude Maitland. He felt her lover the best person to search for the missing girl!

(To be continued.)

A Boston barber has discovered that the unpleasant feeling in the cranium, caused by an excessive indulgence in stimulants, can be removed in a few minutes by the application of towels saturated in hot water. Since the announcement of his method of reducing what is known as "swelled head," several of the barbers of the Hub regularly apply the remedy. To be done properly, not only one towel alone, nor two, should be used, but at least half-a-dozen, completely covering the face with the steaming cloth, and replacing each towel as it becomes cool with another fresh from the hot-water faucet. A dreamy languor creeps over the senses, and in a short time the patient is enabled to go forth with a clear head, an active brain, and the elasticity and vigour of a new man. The hot towel draws the blood away from the brain to the face, making the skin much warmer than the air, which, when the towel is withdrawn, cools and refreshes the skin.

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["I WILL BE EXPLICIT!" HENRY FRASER SAID. "HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO INSULT AND NEGLECT MY CHILD?"]

NOVELLETTE.]

MARIGOLD.

CHAPTER I.

A large studio, elegantly furnished, and bearing evident signs of woman's presence; heavy curtains screening off a small portion which was a bower of beauty, with its stinnettes and pictures, its dainty carpet and lounging chairs; and on a small table was a strip of embroidery, a heap of bright-hued silks, and a tiny gold thimble.

In a low chair a girl of some eighteen summers was seated, her hands loosely clasped, and her eyes full of dreaming thoughts. A beautiful creature, with a slim supple figure, and delicate, high-bred face; the mouth was small and curved, the upper lip short; the eyes clear and brown as summer pools, and about the low broad brow fell tiny rings of yellow brown hair.

She wore a gown of æsthetic shade and shape, for she was one who disdained the monstrosities of modern fashion, and her natural good taste in adorning her pretty person had been cultivated by the artist father whose idol and darling she was.

He, seated before his easel, seemed in quite as idle a mood as she; for, all unknown to her, he sat watching with eyes of love the varying changes of her mobile face. He was a man of noble presence, with rugged, intellectual countenance; an R.A. and very popular with his fellow-artists on account of his geniality and readiness to give a helping hand to all who needed it. Successful in his profession beyond the wildest dreams of his youth, possessed of a large private fortune, and a lovely, loving daughter, it seemed to the outer world that Henry Fraser could have nothing left to desire; that there could be no cloud upon his sky; and few ever guessed that the grief he had felt, when his young wife died in giving

birth to her child, was not less poignant now than eighteen years ago. Perhaps it was keener, because he had so striven to hide it; and now the pain at his heart was hard indeed to bear, for he knew that soon the "pledge of their love" would be taken from him.

Only last night a suitor had offered himself for Miss Fraser. She smiled on him; but although the father had no reason for distrust, he disliked the idea of such an alliance, and wished, with all his heart, that she had chosen the other lover—a clever, poor, but rising young artist whom Henry Fraser had known from boyhood.

Presently he spoke,—
"Marigold, come here," and she rose and went towards him.

He took the slender, supple hands in his.
"Darling," he said, "soon Dunbar Gorst will come for your answer. What am I to say to him? Think well, my daughter, for this is a step which, once taken, cannot be retrieved. Remember that to-day you are choosing the happiness or misery of all your life to come; and (much as I love you) I would rather see you dead than married to a man who would not love and cherish you as all your life you have been loved and cherished."

The sweet, flowerlike face grew very pale, but the young, clear voice was steady as she made answer,—

"Dear father, I am not afraid to trust Dunbar; and when you understand him better you will be glad to think you did not oppose my choice. I wish! oh I do wish I could have given my heart where you desired; but I cannot think of Mr. Gwynne in any other than a friendly light. Dear, when you married mother you loved her with all your heart. There was no one else you could have married."

A spasm of pain crossed his face, and he sighed heavily.

"Let it be as you wish, Marigold; but, oh! my child, what will home be without you?"

She looked startled.

"Why should not I remain with you?"

"If it could be," he began. "But no, I don't fancy Dunbar Gorst would care for such an arrangement, especially as he would have to leave you here whilst he is starring in the provinces. However, I will make the proposal; for oh, child! my darling child, it will be like death to lose you! There, I am a foolish old man, and deserve to be shot for saddening you. And what am I to say to Trevor Gwynne?"

"That whilst I am honoured by his proposal I cannot accept it, because I have given my heart elsewhere. And oh! my dear one, my dear one, for my sake you will try to think kindly of Dunbar, and to believe in him as I believe!"

"Yes, my child, yes!" he answered, cheerfully, but his heart was heavy within him. The fascinating, handsome young actor did not impress him favourably, although he would have failed to say why it was so. "Now run away, for Gorst will be here presently, and I want a little private conversation with him before I allow him to see you."

Stooping, she kissed that dear face which had never been turned upon her save in kindness; and she said, under her breath and all uncertainly,—

"Because a new love has come to me you will not doubt that the old remains the same? You will know you are not less dear to me, my father!"

"Yes, child, yes; and parents should be prepared for such things; but, unfortunately, we never are. We go on dreaming that our children will be ours to the end of the chapter, then suddenly wake to find they are already escaping from our hold. I am afraid we forget that in like manner our parents suffered before us. Heaven bless you, darling, and keep you happy as you are good!"

And then he led her towards the door, and gently thrust her from the room, for he saw the tears in her pretty eyes, felt her trembling in his embrace, and knew that she would re-

cover her composure best alone. When she was gone he sat down and waited silently, sadly, for Dunbar Gorst's arrival.

Soon he heard a quick, light step upon the stairs, and a hasty hand upon the door. "Come in!" he said, and the next moment he was confronted by a tall, handsome man of some twenty-eight years.

As his eyes rested on him he hardly wondered at his daughter's choice, for Dunbar Gorst was good to look upon—of splendid physique, with bold blue eyes, and curling yellow hair.

His face was clean-shaven, save for the drooping yellow moustache which effectually hid the lines of the mouth, and made perfect judgment of the man's character almost impossible.

"You are good to grant me an interview to-day," he said, in a mellow voice. "I dare to think it augurs well for my suit!" and he glanced round as though in search of Marigold, well knowing it was her custom to sit with her father when no visitors or patrons were present. Noticing that look Henry Fraser smiled.

"She is not here!" he said. "I thought it best to see you alone, as there are some little matters we must discuss before I give you an irrevocable decision. I have been already satisfied as to your family; but I wish to know what sentiments you are prepared to make upon my daughter. Understand, she will not come to you penniless. I could not bear that she should be solely dependent upon her husband's generosity. But marriage is a serious thing, and should not be undertaken lightly and thoughtlessly. I should like to feel that when I am gone, should my fortune take wings to itself, Marigold would be secure from poverty."

"Mr. Fraser, I am prepared to do all you desire. Do you think I fail to recognise the value of the gift you are giving me?" the young man answered quickly. "I know there are other and worthier suitors for her hand than I, and I cannot thank you sufficiently for entertaining my proposal."

"So long as Marigold loved you I could do no less," gravely; "although, I tell you frankly, I had other hopes for her—not that I have any personal objection to you, or your proposition; but your profession will take you very much from her, and she has not been used to solitude. I am afraid (with a little sad smile) that she is spoiled for anything but happiness. She has never known a sorrow in her life. Be good to her. It would break my heart to see her changed in any way."

"I will cherish her even as you have done," said the lover, "and you shall not lose your daughter; rather you will gain a son!" and he stroked out a cordial hand to Henry Fraser.

"One thing more," said the latter, a moment later. "This house is a large one. Why should you not take up your residence here? It is very central, easy of exit and access, and I promise I would not interfere with your domestic arrangements. You shall come and go as you please, and, if you wish it, you can have your separate apartments—and I should not utterly lose my child."

"You are very good; and as it is not my desire to part you and Marigold I accept your very generous offer, with one exception—that we form one family. There must be no further talk of keeping separate apartments."

In a burst of gratitude the artist offered his hand.

"You have set my mind at rest. Now go to Marigold. You know where to find her. Tell her all that we have arranged; you will do it better than I can, and you must decide between yourselves when the wedding shall take place."

"I hope it may be very soon," retorted Dunbar, laughing, and went to seek his lady. She rose to meet him as he entered, her lovely face aglow with happiness, her beautiful eyes instinct with love.

"Your father has sent me to you," the young man said. "He has given his treasure to me!" and with that he took her into his arms. "You are mine now and for ever, sweetheart."

"For ever," she answered with an upward glance full of confidence in him, of admiration of his strength and manly beauty.

"You might have done much better for yourself than to choose me—an actor who has nothing of his own save what his talent brings him," Dunbar said presently. "What did you find in me that should win your heart?"

"Can you ask, Dunbar? Do you think I am so blind I cannot see how good and noble you are, how much I am your inferior in all things? What a stupid creature I must sometimes seem to you?" glorifying him at her own expense, as so many women will do, making a hero out of commonest clay, and worshipping him with passionate, humble worship. Ah! but to such as these, when the awakening comes, as come it must, it is more cruel than death."

Dunbar Gorst was used to the pretty flatteries of pretty women. There was no one more liked than the handsome, popular actor; and these flatteries were as income to him. He valued man as he lived, or had a higher opinion of his own merits; and yet Marigold Fraser's simple words touched some secret chord of his nature, and made him humble for awhile.

"My darling!" he said, under his breath. "My darling! you hold me in too high esteem. I am not worthy so much love and so much reverence; but, with your help I will strive to be so!" and, at that instant, he really meant the words he uttered.

Then he drew her down beside him, and began to discuss plans for the future with almost boyish eagerness. He half-regretted that Marigold did not share his professional honours; but, bright and clever as she was, she had no histrionic talent. And even had it been otherwise, Mr. Fraser would never have allowed his darling to lead such an arduous and public life.

"Your father has made very good to us, sweetheart, and has made our future bright and easy."

"Ah!" she interrupted. "Is he not generous in all his thoughts and deeds? You must learn to know him better, to love him (not as I do, because that is impossible), but as a good son might. I thank Heaven every day for my dear father."

"You are a little enthusiast!" he said, with a short laugh.

He was of a jealous temperament, and it seemed to him that in giving her father so much she robbed him (Dunbar) in a measure of his due. But he was wise enough not to give utterance to such a thought at such a time. He only adroitly turned the conversation into another channel; and before their interview ended he had won Marigold's promise to marry him at the close of the London season.

Then they were to travel through Italy into Switzerland, and at the close of the month return home, in order to fulfil an engagement Dunbar Gorst had entered into.

But Marigold was to accompany him to Manchester and Liverpool, after which he would bring her back to her father, with whom she would remain whilst he went further north.

And when, at last, her lover left her she sat dreaming happy dreams, whilst the May sunshine streamed into the room, and bathed all the lovely, girlish figure in its golden glory.

At last she rose, reproaching herself that she had so long left her father; but when she reached the studio door she would have retreated had retreat been possible, and her face flushed deeply as she met the intent regard of a pair of grave, brown eyes. But the owner of them advanced quickly, with outstretched hands.

"Do not run away, Miss Fraser! I am just

going; but I should like to congratulate you first. Your father has been telling me the news. May you be very, very happy in your new life. Heaven bless you in all you do!"

He spoke quite steadily, giving no sign of sadness or disappointment; although, indeed, his heart was heavy within him, for this girl was dearer to him than life, or even the fame he coveted.

But she knew what he was suffering, and could find no words of thanks for his good wishes; only as he went away her eyes followed him with pining tenderness.

CHAPTER II.

At the close of the season Dunbar Gorst and Marigold Fraser were married, and the ceremony was voted quite the event of the season.

In the old home the father sat lonely, with no heart for work, no desire for anything save the sight of the dear face which had made sunshine for him through eighteen changing years.

Trevor Gwynne came and went, bringing news of the outer world, hiding the sorrows of his own heart, the bitterness of his deep trouble; and between these two men there existed a wonderful love, a wonderful sympathy.

"I wish she had chosen you," the elder said, one day. "It is uncharitable, I suppose, but for the life of me I cannot trust Gorst. I am horribly afraid for my child."

And what could Trevor say, knowing as he did, so much more of Dunbar's character than was wise to tell? He only answered,—

"Their love is mutual. She cannot fail to be happy." But deep down in his soul was the conviction that Marigold's happiness would be ephemeral.

The honeymoon waned. The Gorsts had returned to England, and Marigold's letters were very frequent; but Mr. Fraser fancied a new tone had crept into them.

"Of course," he thought, "I may be mistaken, and naturally I must expect to find some change in her. She will be older and graver in ways and words; but her marriage is a new thing yet—and it seems to me her letters are losing much of their vivacity."

So he tormented himself with many a doubt, many a fear, and finally said to Trevor,—

"I think I'll go down to Liverpool and see the child."

But Trevor answered quickly,—

"I would not were I you. Naturally for the first few months of his married life Gorst will want his bride to himself. And he might think you doubted his ability to take good care of her, or that his love was less than it seemed."

Mr. Fraser sighed and hesitated, but eventually acted upon Trevor's advice, acknowledging frankly it was good; adding wistfully,—

"But I love her, and love is never wise. All my heart cries out to me, 'Go to her! go to her!' But if by so doing I should cause the first disunion between husband and wife I could never forgive myself—because nothing is ever quite the same after that fatal first quarrel."

But Mr. Fraser did not see Marigold so soon as he had hoped. When Dunbar left Liverpool he went on to Edinburgh; and six months elapsed before they returned to town; so that it was February when they came, and the season had begun.

It was night when they arrived, and Mr. Fraser had had fire lit in every room, and all the lamps were burning. His darling must find everything bright to welcome her. And when he heard the sound of carriage wheels he began to tremble like some frail woman waiting her lover's coming; but conquering the momentary weakness he went forward, and as Marigold entered the hall awoke, clasped, and kissed her hands, holding her aloof a moment

that he might the better see if all had been well with her. She looked radiantly happy then, and snatching her hands from him wound her arms about his neck, crying softly—"Father! oh my darling father! oh how good it is to be home!"

Just her old self; the new love had not changed her. Dunbar had not saddened her (so thought Henry Fraser); and impulsively he stretched out his hand to his son-in-law.

"Welcome home, my boy. This is, indeed, a right royal evening! Marigold, you are prettier than ever." She laughed and blushed, and through all that night her father detected no change in her! But in the morning much of her brightness had vanished; and how was Henry Fraser to guess that he had been the cause of grief to her? that in his overweening jealousy and arrogance Dunbar had spoken bitterly of her evident joy at her home-coming, and declared, almost with an oath, that her father was more to her than her husband; that she never troubled herself to be gay and engaging when alone with him; and Marigold had wept bitter tears, but had uttered no reproach. Her nature was too pure and proud to make recrimination easy, and she had not yet realized that her husband was

"One

Who wearies when the goal was won;
To whom the charm of change was all
That bound his heart in woman's thrall."

She still believed in his love for her, and mingled with her passion for him was a tender pity for his infirmity of temper. She never spoke of it to any, never complained of the many hard days she had already borne—she whose life hitherto had known no cloud, no grief. She thought she hid everything perfectly from her father; but the eyes of love are keen, and he saw much that she believed known only to herself. It pained him beyond all words to notice how she watched Dunbar's every look whilst she spoke or moved, as though she feared in some way to displease him. Then, too, she was paler, thinner than before, less prone to laugh, and even her voice seemed changed and languid. But if he ventured to hint at this she would smile, and smile closer to him saying,—

"I am not very well, and you are fanciful, dear. But don't speak of your fancies to Dunbar; he would be troubled by them? And always as the young man entered the house, she met him with fond words and tender smiles, even though he often impatiently repulsed her. Again and again, at some petulant word of his, Henry Fraser felt the angry blood flame into his face, and longed to take up the cudgels in his darling's behalf, but was wise enough to know that by so doing he would only make her worse, and by almost superhuman efforts held his peace.

Naturally, Dunbar Gorst's profession took him much from home; but between rehearsal and evening performance there were many hours, and few of these were spent with his wife. No account was ever rendered of how and where they were passed, but Henry Fraser came by degrees to know the bitter truth.

This man who had stolen his dearest treasure did not now value it—would not see its bright beauty and purity—was living such a life as was shame to himself and misery to any who held him dear.

Floating like a bubble on the stream of fashion and folly, flattered by matrons and maids of high degree, eating dainty dinners at Richmond or Greenwich with women that other women eyed askance, and whom men treated with mocking courtesy—that was how he spent his days; asking little, thinking little of the young wife at home who watched with such loving, anxious eyes for his coming, who grew so pale and weary with her oft-repeated visits.

He was not at this time actively unkind to her, but her pleasure must be his. His will was law, and he resented anything approaching what he was pleased to term interference on her part.

In the early days of their married life it had been his delight for her to be present at his triumphs. Now, if she hinted a wish to attend any performance, he tabooed it for some want reason or other.

His wife was beautiful. Yes; but she was not *chic*. She had lost much of her brightness and vivacity; and some of his lady (?) acquaintances had commiserated him on being the partner of such a pale, lachrymose creature.

Public opinion was all to him. The voice of the mob swayed him; and how could he think that Marigold would ever be popular in the circles he adorned!

He dare not even think, as yet, of introducing her to them. He knew Henry Fraser could be very terrible when roused, and that his strongest passion was his love for his child—that he would rather see her dead than the associate of women less pure than her mother had been.

Then, too, his father-in-law was generous. His wife was a very good investment, for she cost him literally nothing, all her wants being supplied by her father.

So for awhile he restrained the evil nature within him, so far as to treat Marigold with indifferent courtesy, and not to live the life he loved too openly. Thus matters stood when they had been married a year; and Henry Fraser wondered what would be the end of it all, and what of joy remained to the pale young wife.

Sometimes Trevor Gwynne came to the old house; but he had small pleasure in doing so, for Marigold's manner towards him was constrained, and he did not know it was the result of her husband's jealousy.

Not loving her himself, alas! alas! it had come to that already, he yet was angry if any man paid her the most ordinary attention, or if she showed pleasure in any man's society. False and impure himself, he could not understand her utter truth and innocence.

He now never asked or wished for her society abroad; and when, on the anniversary of her most unhappy marriage, she begged that he would "come home as early as possible, because she wished to make a little festival of the occasion," he answered sharply, "that she was unreasonable, and had no sense of the many duties towards society his profession imposed."

She answered nothing, but her face was corpse-like in its pallor as she went wearily upstairs.

But Henry overheard the short colloquy and thought,—

"It is time for me to speak," only to Marigold he said nothing.

That night she held no festival. She was too sore at heart. She had tasted love's cup, and drained it even to "that last worst drop—neglect," and now the poor child craved only for death.

She was so tired of it all—so tired! She laid her face on her arms, and wept aloud in her anguish. Life was too cruel, too cruel! Twelve months ago she was a happy bride, and now, she said, weeping wildly, "I am a wretched forlorn, forsaken wife." Oh, Trevor Gwynne had need to pray, "Heaven bless you." If he knew all he would perhaps change his to "Heaven help you! Dunbar! Dunbar, you break my heart—you break my heart!"

In the small hours of the morning Mr. Gorst reached his home. He was flushed with success, flattery and wine; and it did not please him that Mr. Fraser should be waiting up for him.

But he made no comment upon this unusual event, only kicked off his boots, yawned extensively, and declared he was tired as a dog, and would go to bed.

"Not yet," Henry Fraser said, in a low, cold voice, "I have something to say to you first!"

"Fire away, old fellow!" retorted Gorst, with light insolence, "and make the matter short. By Jove! I never was so tired in all my life."

"I want to ask you how long this sort of

thing is going on?" the artist asked in level, frigid tones.

"May I ask you to be more explicit?" said Dunbar, flippantly; and then the long, subdued passion broke into fierce flame, as Fraser leaped to his feet, crying,—

"I will be explicit! How long are you going to neglect and insult my child?—to leave her lonely that you may spend hours with women whose names it would be an insult to breathe before her? Do you think I am blind and deaf to all that passes? Do you think I know nothing of your evil life, your shameful amours! I tell you there must be an end of these things, or I will take my daughter wholly from you."

"You forget," sneered the other, "that although she is your daughter she is my wife, and the law gives me the sole claim to her so long as I do not ill-treat her. Don't go too far. I am dangerous when roused, and should not scruple to take my wife utterly and for ever from you. Do you understand?"

"You make your meaning tolerably clear," the artist said, with exceeding bitterness; "but do not try me too much. I would murder you if by so doing I could win back my child's lost peace and joy."

"Pooh! Such talk is utter nonsense. And, look here, I will permit no interference between myself and Mrs. Gorst. That will make matters worse for her;" and then he flung out of the room and went upstairs to torture the poor child, who loved him yet, although now she knew him for what he was, and had no hope of any good to come.

And Henry Fraser bowing his face upon his arms, groaned aloud. When he lifted himself erect there were tears of anguish in his eyes.

He looked old and worn as he went up to his room. Outside Marigold's door he paused and stretched out his hands as if in blessing, as he murmured,—

"Oh, my darling! oh, my darling! What shall I do for you? How can I help you?"

But there came no answer to his cry, and he passed on heavily. There was almost murder in his heart as he thought of Dunbar Gorst and all the woe he had worked for Marigold.

In the few days that followed the two men scarcely exchanged a word, and Dunbar wore a sulky look when he condescended to return home. Marigold was miserable; but she made no protest, only tried with might and main to keep peace between husband and father.

But smoldering fires will burst into flame at smallest provocation, and that provocation was not long wanting.

Marigold and her father were seated at luncheon, when Dunbar rushed in from rehearsal.

"Can't stay a moment," he said, "I am off with the Hiltons to Pangebourne. Sam's come home until midnight, as I must hurry from Pangebourne to the theatre;" and he rushed upstairs like a whirlwind. In a little while, however, he returned. "Where are my sapphire studs?" he asked, irately. "Why aren't my things kept in proper order?"

"I have not seen them since May last, when you were them at Mrs. Headley's ball," began Marigold, tamperately.

"That is a lie! I'll swear I've worn them since. Just run up and hunt for them!"

"I will go, of course!" cheerfully; "but I have searched for them so often, and all to no purpose."

And then he made use of a vile oath.

Henry Fraser started to his feet. "No man shall use such language to or before my daughter," he cried, "be he fifty times her husband!"

CHAPTER III.

They stood confronting each other, both wild of eye and white of face, breathing hard, like men who pant for the fray.

"No man shall dictate to me concerning my rights!" cried Dunbar, furiously. "I will use such expressions as I please in addressing my wife. She is mine—mine, do you hear! to do with as I will! My goods and chattels—"

"Oh!" cried the poor, frightened girl. "I entreat you not to quarrel. Father, dear father, he did not mean it. Men are so prone to speak hastily; and, Dunbar, if—he seemed to resent your words, it is only because he loves me so dearly that—that he cannot bear to see me sorrowful; and I am so easily saddened just now—just now!" and here she could not keep back the heavy sobs and bitter tears.

Fraser took her gently by the hand and thrust her behind him, as though he feared Dunbar in his rage should strike her. Then he said, slowly and deliberately,—

"It is very evident we can no longer reside under the same roof. Take all that is yours and go. I will provide for my child!"

"Oh, father! Oh, my husband!" and then she flung herself between them, crying wildly, "You break my heart! you break my heart! Oh, if I could die—if I could die!" and slipped down at her father's feet.

With infinite tenderness he raised her, and held her fast.

"You see your work, you villain? Are you satisfied? Go, before I forget her presence, and give you that chastisement you so richly deserve!"

"Look to your daughter," the other answered, roughly. "She has fainted. It will be impossible to move her to-day, but by to-morrow I will have a place ready for her. Oh, yes, protest as much as you please; you cannot help yourself or her, and the law will not help you. I am sick of it all. I would like to be free of the lot of you. I wish she were dead!"

"Oh, Heaven! if you, her year-old husband, wish that, what can I do but pray for it? Oh, my beloved! my beloved!" and he bent his tortured face upon that dear, unconscious one until Dunbar's voice roused him, saying,—

"I shall not return to-night; but in the morning you may expect me, and see that all is in readiness for our departure, or it will be worse for her."

And then he was gone; and Henry Fraser, gently placing her upon a couch, applied such simple remedies as were at hand. Soon a strong shuddering passed over the prostrate form; the white lips quivered, and the weary lids lifting showed the dark, despairing eyes, which looked as though they could never smile again.

"Oh, father! father! why did you rouse me? Oh, it were far better for me to be dead than live like this!"

And although she was so dear to him he scarcely wished that she should live. He could not speak, but he held her fast, and kissed her again and again, praying over her in his aching heart, and wondering what would be the end for her.

Presently she asked for Dunbar, and was told that he had left the house, but would return the following morning; and then in a very uncertain voice the father spoke of the coming parting, and begged that she would go away to some safe place where they could be happy together. But she heard him with amazement.

"He is my husband," she said, "and I love him. There is nothing I would not forgive him save infidelity to me."

Henry Fraser was tempted then to tell her all the black and bitter truth; but she was weak and ill. How would she bear such a grief? Should he be the one to deprive her of all hope?

"He is sometimes hasty," went on the patient, pathetic voice, "and says many things he does not mean; but he loves me—oh, you believe that, dear! It would kill me to doubt it—and then what could he say?"

The slow, sad day wore by, and towards evening Trevor came in answer to his old

friend's summons. He was startled by the change in him, but when he heard his story his face was almost as white as the others.

"At any cost she must be saved," he said, hurriedly. "Best to tell her all the truth."

"That would kill her!"

Better to die from one swift, sharp blow than to drag out a life of torture; and she has redress for such wrongs as hers. The law will out the tie which binds her to a roused and a profligate."

"She would never bear the publicity of the thing. She is so sensitive; and, however innocent and pure a woman is, she suffers shame in passing through a divorce court. It is a nice, charitable world," with a bitter sneer, "especially to women. From the days of Eden, the blame of an evil deed is always cast upon the weaker vessel."

"What, then, is to be done? Can you calmly leave her entirely in that villain's power?"

"Calmly! Great Heaven, the thought drives me frantic. But what can I do? There is only one way in which to avert this thing, and pride forbids it. And yet dare I be proud where my child's peace is concerned. I will do it. I will beg Gorat's pardon for a few hasty words, and entreat him to remain with me; but it goes against the grain, my boy, it goes against the grain."

"And I fear it will be useless, but I will not attempt to dissuade you from your purpose. You may, of course, succeed, because Gorat will gain nothing by separating himself from you, and you will have your daughter under your own espionage. I wish I could help you materially. If there is anything I can do you may command me."

"I know that, and am grateful to you. Oh, Trevor, my boy, if only she had loved you?"

"Don't!" the other answered. "I try never to think of such a possibility. May I see her now do you think?"

"Yes; go to her; she is in the breakfast-room. I will join you presently—when I have learned self-control."

So Trevor went to her, and found her lying very white and still upon a couch. She would have risen as he entered, but he made a hasty movement to prevent this, and taking possession of one small, frail hand, asked,—

"Is there nothing I can do for you? No way in which I can help you, dear Mrs. Gorat?"

A faint flush rose to the delicate face as she answered,—

"There is nothing, thank you. My father and my husband are all the help I need."

It was an ungracious speech, but the poor child could not bear that any should so much as hint Dunbar was not all he should be; and she did not forget that once this man beside her had loved her very dearly, or that Dunbar objected to any intercourse between them.

But she regretted her speech when she saw how the honest, dark face changed and paled; and with an impulse which made her look like a faint picture of the old Marigold, she said, hastily,—

"Oh, forgive me! pray forgive me! I ought to be ashamed of myself for such a rude rejection of kindness; but—but," with a pitiful quiver of the pale lips, "you all seem to think I need compassion and assistance—and I don't. How can I, whilst I have husband and father too?"

Poor loyal, little soul! How persistently she threw the mantle of her love over Dunbar's vices and brutality, thinking—ah! how vainly—to hide them from all eyes but her own.

"I have nothing to forgive," Trevor said, gravely. "If I presume too far it is your right to rebuke me. But I did not intend to be presumptuous. I am so awkward in expressing myself, I fear. What I would say is, that if at any time I can serve or help anyone who is dear to you, if any deed of mine can make or keep you happy, I shall be a proud and grateful man. A friend, however humble, however awkward, is not to be despised."

"Oh! I feel that, and I hate to think I have hurt you. You were always kind to me in the old days—before—before I was married; and I am sure—oh, yes, quite sure!—that if there were any need for help, and, oh! believe there is not, I would sooner apply to you than any, save my dear father."

It was pitiful to hear how she insisted upon her happiness and security, how eager she was to make others believe in her idol as she once had done! Trevor Gwynne felt that nothing could be more pathetic. If she had railed against Dunbar, if she had uttered any complaint, he could have remembered her with less pain, could have felt that in time she would grow indifferent to her husband's neglect, and find solace in some congenial pursuit.

He sat talking with her until her father joined them, then he rose to take his leave, for the thoughts was in his heart, "I must not see her often, I am only human. I love her, and her sorrows will make her speak words that would be an insult to her and a shame to me." He likened her, in his own mind, to a pure white lily, stainless and sweet. He bowed down in spirit to her as to some saint. Ah! why—why had she not chosen him?

Through the long hours of the night father and daughter sat together, he holding her hand, and she with her lovely head upon his breast, quiet at last because he was near. Close to midnight he said,—

"Let me carry you to your room, dear heart?"

But she answered,—

"Please no. I could not sleep. I am better here, but you, dear, must be weary. I am quite well now. You may leave me in safety."

But he would not go. He was wide awake and wretched. He hated the thought of a solitary night. He would not leave his darling until the final moment.

So he sat by her, sometimes silent, sometimes speaking in low tones, and thus the dawn found them.

First came the grey, uncertain light, and the stars grew sickly in the broadening gleam; then slowly the neutral tints faded quite away, rosy clouds flitted across an amber and pale green sky; under the eaves the birds began to stir and make music. Then suddenly the sun rose up in all his early glory, and

"Up rose the far hum

Of moving wheels and multitudes astir; and all that in a city's murmur swells."

"It is a lovely world!" Marigold murmured.

"But its loveliness is spoiled by sin, suffering, want and death!" answered her father.

"There, there, do not look so troubled. Try to snatch a little sleep, or Dunbar will be vexed to find you looking so pale and heavy." Heaven forgive me that lie, he thought, as he bent to kiss her.

"I feel wide awake, but I will try to follow your advice, and you, dear father, do the same. Oh! how sweet the roses smell! If I should die before you, dear, you must strew them all about my quiet body. I always loved them, you know."

"I will not have you talk in such a fashion," quickly, "and I am going to sit by you until you sleep. If you persist in keeping awake, why I shall have no rest."

He brought her a spray of maiden-blush roses—those dear old favourites which so many now deem as unfashionable—and laid them on her breast. With a smile she thanked him, and with that smile still upon her lips she fell asleep.

But rest was not for him when all the future lay so dark before her. He went out into the garden, and walked with heavy steps amongst his darling's flowers. This morning the scent of musk and mignonette, of heliotrope and honeysuckle, the fragrance of the rose, sickened him. He could loiter there no longer; so he went out upon the road, and

wandered on and on until he was so utterly weary that he was glad to turn homewards.

He found Marigold waiting for him, very pale and quiet, but wearing her prettiest gown; and he sighed to think how vain were all her arts to bring back the recreant heart of her husband.

Very much later he heard Gorst enter, and went out to meet him.

"Is everything in readiness?" demanded the young man. "I have a cab in waiting, and I have no time to spare."

"Dunbar," said the elder, speaking with a great effort, "do not leave me in anger. Mine was the fault. Overlook it if you can, and stay with me. I am an old man. I shall not trouble you long. I will give you no further occasion for offence."

"So that is your tune?" retorted Gorst, coarsely. "I thought it would be. But I am tired of your puritanical ways, tired of your officiousness, of everything connected with you. I prefer my wife should come to the home I have prepared for her."

"For Heaven's sake come back! It will break her heart to leave me and the home where she was so happy!" cried Fraser, trembling exceedingly. "I'll hold my peace. I'll give you anything that it is in my power to give if you will but have mercy on her and me," and his voice died out in a sigh that was half a groan.

"You should have thought of such things before. It is too late now. If Marigold has not packed, send her to me as she is. Her boxes can follow. There is the address," tossing him a card. "Occasionally she may visit you, but I won't give you admission to my apartments."

And then, before another word was spoken, Marigold appeared dressed as though for walking.

"I am ready," was all she said.

"I am glad that for once in your life you are punctual!"

She did not heed the bitter speech as she laid her arms about her father's neck, and pressed her cheek to his.

"Dear, good-bye. Do not forget me. But do not be over anxious for me. I—I shall be happy," and she turned away with a bitter sob. And he—well, he saw her driven from her home; and then blindly, with staggering steps, he made his way to the deserted studio, and falling on his knees he wept aloud—the awful tears of a strong man.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT same night Marigold's baby was prematurely born, and the young mother's life was despaired of. She had suffered so much and so long in secret that she had no strength left to contend with this final sorrow—the separation from her father—and she utterly succumbed.

Dunbar Gorst had taken handsome apartments near the Strand, and fortunately the landlady was a kind, motherly woman, or it would have gone hard with Marigold.

"She is very ill, sir," she said, pityingly, to the young husband. "I think if she has any near friends you had better send for them at once. Doctor Goodchild is greatly concerned for her."

"Oh," said Dunbar, angrily, "women and doctors always exaggerate illness of any kind into gigantic proportions! No, there is no need to send for Mrs. Gorst's friends!"

Mrs. Danby opened wide eyes upon him, then saying, loftily,—

"Of course, sir, it is no concern of mine, and if the lady should die I shall have nothing with which to reproach myself. Would you care to see the baby?"

"I no! I hate babies!" savagely. "I suppose I can go to bed now; I shall not be needed?"

"You certainly will not," answered Mrs. Danby, coldly. "At what time will you breakfast, sir?"

"At ten. Good-night," and going to his room he soon fell into a profound sleep, careless of aught that might happen to that poor, young thing he had once sworn to love and cherish for ever.

But the landlady returned at once to her patient, who lay quite unconscious and motionless upon her bed.

"Poor child!" she said, under her breath, "poor child! I wonder no longer now that your face was so sad, that the look in your eyes as you entered made me long to kiss and make much of you."

She sat with her throughout the night; then the doctor came, bringing a quiet, pleasant-looking woman, whom he introduced as nurse, and Mrs. Danby stole away to take her much-needed rest.

But she was doomed to be interrupted. About eleven the nurse came to her.

"I would be glad if you would come to the lady. She is very delicious, and keeps crying out for her father. The husband has gone out, and I don't know what to do."

Mrs. Danby went hurrying to Marigold's room, where she found Dr. Goodchild striving to calm the girl.

"It just amounts to this," he said. "The father must be brought here at once if she is ever to recover," and as though in answer to his words, Marigold cried, with ever-increasing anguish,—

"Father! father! father!"

There were tears in Mrs. Danby's eyes as she said,—

"I don't know the poor lady's friends. She only came yesterday."

"Oh, she was Miss Fraser, the artist's daughter; and she has just about ruined her life by marrying Gorst. He's a villain! Have I your permission to bring Mr. Fraser here?"

"Certainly, doctor. I'm not going to have her death on my conscience. Poor child! so young, so lonely, and so wretched!"

"Fraser must have been a fool to give her into such a fellow's keeping," retorted the doctor, as he hurried downstairs, and, springing into his brougham, drove rapidly away.

He returned in an incredibly short time, bringing Mr. Fraser with him. The latter looked very worn and old, but he thanked Mrs. Danby cordially for her goodness to Marigold as he followed her up to the sick chamber.

"Father! father! father!" the cry rang piercingly out, and the strong man's soul was shaken to the centre.

But controlling himself by one supreme effort, he approached the bed, and taking those poor, fluttering, aimless hands in his, said firmly,—

"Hush, child, I am here. I, your father!" and she seemed to listen, so that encouraged by her manner he went on, "Lie down, be quiet. I am here!" and with his hand upon her brow pressed her back among the pillows.

She looked at him with wide, unseeing eyes; but it was evident that his mere presence was a comfort to her, that his touch soothed her. So he sat there, smoothing back the tangled tresses, speaking in a low, soft voice, until like a child she fell asleep.

"He has saved her life," said the medical man. "When she wakes she will be conscious. Never mind what Gorst says; he is to stay here until she has recovered a little of her strength. If he objects refer him to me; I shall know how to deal with him."

Dunbar was almost frantic with rage when he returned and heard that Henry Fraser already formed one of the household; but he was wise enough not to oppose the doctor's will, so he and the artist remained in the same house, scarcely ever seeing each other, and having their meals served separately.

When she first recovered consciousness, Marigold was too weak to wonder over anything that had happened, or to trouble over the past; but soon she began to take notice of her baby, the little frail atom of humanity which all of them knew could not long keep its hold of life; and when, one day, she felt it cold

and dead upon her breast, her grief was terrible.

"He would have loved me!" she wailed. "He would have loved me! Oh, that he had lived!" but in his heart her father thanked Heaven the child had passed away; "for," he said, "doubtless he would have inherited his father's nature, and, in later years, finished the work Gorst began—the work of breaking the gentlest heart on earth."

The death of her child much retarded Marigold's recovery; but at length she was able to leave her bed, and, so much having been achieved, Dunbar waylaid the artist, saying,—

"As my wife is on the high road to health now, it would be pleasanter for all parties if you would return to your own place."

Fraser bowed quietly. An awful rage possessed him, and he longed to strike this cruel smiling wretch to the ground; but he had the law on his side, and if he (Fraser) broke it, matters would be worse still for his darling.

"I will go as soon as you please; but I have one thing first to say. Be good to her, and you shall not repent it. I am a rich man, and can afford a heavy bribe."

For the life of him he could not resist the temptation to insult Dunbar—if, indeed, such a man could be insulted. The actor's face flushed darkly.

"I need nothing you can give," he said; but none the less did he leave Mr. Fraser to defray all the expenses of his wife's illness, and at no time did he contribute to her support.

"You will allow my daughter to visit me occasionally?"

"That depends very much upon her behaviour and your own!" insolently. "If she comes to Trafalgar House it is with the understanding that she does not meet Gwynne, and that you do not return her visits. There, don't be riled! Rows are bad form, and I am in a hurry! You will have left when I return? Thank you! I am going to give a little party, and object to a death's head at the feast!"

And with that he disappeared down the steps, leaving Henry Fraser to his own most bitter thoughts.

Over the parting between father and daughter it is wisest not to linger. It is enough to say that when Mrs. Danby went in the patient's room she found her lying white and unconscious upon the floor, her teeth set hard upon the nether lip. The good soul's eyes were wet with tears as she called the nurse to her aid.

"She had better have died," she said, "her life is utterly wretched. Poor child, poor child! I can even thank Heaven now that my own dear girl was taken away so early. She was engaged to be married, but she got a chill, and being away there was no one to see after her, so she got worse and worse until she was forced to come home, and here she died. I was like a mad woman then; but I have lived to thank Heaven that she is gone, although I mourn for her still, as Rachel did for her children, for a woman had better drown herself than link her life to that of many a man round us. There, there, my dear!" in a soothing tone to Marigold, who showed signs of returning consciousness, "there is nothing to frighten you. Starr, give me the port. She needs something to put colour into these pale cheeks, and strength into her poor limbs."

Very, very slowly Marigold struggled back to life and misery. It was grievous to see the change in the once bright girl—beautiful she still was, but with a beauty that made one sad to look upon it.

The sweet mouth had taken a most pathetic curve; the deep, brown eyes were deepened and darkened by a weight of woe; all her pretty sauciness had flown; and through the faint, sweet voice there ran a note of patient sadness.

She never complained, never uttered any reproach when Dunbar was more than usually trying or cruel.

She still hung about him with little observances of love, would meet him with a smile; and, if he were in a pleasant mood, would lift her face for the one customary kiss.

He was harsh and neglectful; but it was her duty to bear with him, and hide his faults from those around, and it was with her, as it is with many another woman—

"Through passionate duty loves springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone."

It almost broke her father's heart to see the change in her; but he knew how much any comment upon it would hurt her, she was so cruelly sensitive to anything that reflected discredit upon her husband, and refrained from speaking of it.

Mrs. Danby was good to her, helping her in many ways, and giving her such delicate sympathy that even poor, sensitive Marigold could neither be hurt nor angry by it.

As she recovered strength, Dunbar began to entertain a great deal, and his guests were scarcely of a type to please his wife.

Men and women elegantly dressed, but loud of voice, loud in manners, made the dainty rooms a rendezvous; drank Dunbar's wine, ate of Marigold's delicate dishes, talked slang, laughed hilariously over this or that scandal, whilst they made much of the host, and coolly ignored the hostess.

Perhaps they felt discomfort in her presence, she was so utterly opposed to them in all things—so pale, so pure, so gentle. What had she in common with them? As for the actor himself he hated to see her sitting quiet and pale at the head of his table. She had no longer any charm for him, and to his confidantes he openly lamented he had exchanged single for double misery.

One day she attended a private exhibition of pictures, taking Mrs. Danby with her, much to the good creature's delight, for she was proud and fond of "her lady," as she always called Marigold.

There were some of Henry Fraser's best works to be seen; and Marigold was brighter than usual, for she heard so many voices round praising her father that a glad thrill of triumph stirred her heart. But she was not strong in these days; and, wearying, she begged Mrs. Danby to accompany her to a seat in a quiet corner of the hall.

"I am so tired," she said, "and too utterly stupid to talk. Will you please let me be quite quiet a little while, and then we will do the rest of the pictures?"

So they sat together for some time in silence, Marigold with closed eyes and drooped head; and presently behind them came a soft treble voice, which said,—

"I know it is true, I have seen these things with my own eyes. Dunbar Fraser is really in love with Mrs. Collington! Nice taste he must have to prefer that bold woman to his wife. I hear she is very pretty, very modest, and adores him, but that he is a brute to her."

"I suppose he is," answered a deeper voice, "that of a man. It is his nature to trample on the weak," and then the talkers sat down beside Mrs. Danby, and continued their conversation.

"I am rather surprised about the Collington affair," said the man. "Of course, you know she is received only in the most doubtful society. What more can a divorced expect?"

The lady shrugged her shoulders.

"All that does not prevent Mr. Gort worshipping at her shrine, and she is immensely rich in her own right. Perhaps he hopes his wife will give him his freedom."

"Gort is a blackguard!"

And then that poor child could bear no more. Starting to her feet she said in a low, agonised voice,—

"How dare you say these things, and I do not believe them. Oh no! no! no! it would kill me to know they were true," and then she turned and fled, followed closely by Mrs. Danby.

"Did you see how the poor soul looked?" asked the man. "I wish to Heaven some one would punch my head for giving her so cruel

a blow," but his companion answered nothing, only there were tears in her eyes.

With breathless speed Marigold hurried towards Trafalgar House, Mrs. Danby having hard work to keep pace with her. She had but one thought. She must see her father, must ask him if it was true Dunbar preferred some other woman to herself; she was so young, her heart was so bruised and bleeding, she must speak or die. And yet, when she had nearly reached her goal, she turned to Mrs. Danby, saying gently,—

"Forgive my thoughtlessness. In my anger and grief I forgot your comfort. I am very sorry. Let us go home. I will not take my troubles to my father; he—he is not so strong as he used to be. And you will try to forget what we overheard, because it is not true. Oh, no! no! How foolish I was to let such idle words trouble me for an instant!" and then she laughed, but her laugh was sadder than any tears could have been. "Of course all public men have to bear their share of abuse, and there are some who do not hesitate to steal away their good names, rather rejoice in doing so. Oh, you will forget—and tell me you disbelieve the dreadful tale."

But Mrs. Danby was silent. She dared not lie so utterly to the wretched girl beside her; and before Marigold had time to notice her strange silence Trevor Gwynne came upon them.

"You are ill," he said, quickly; and drawing her hand within his arm, walked slowly beside her. "You do too much; you consider yourself too little. Let me take you home, and promise me you will rest for the remainder of the day, or we shall have you laid up again, and Mr. Fraser in an agony of fear over you."

"Mr. Fraser! not her husband! She could have shrieked aloud in her shame and anguish; but he laid a controlling hand upon hers, and spoke in a low, firm voice, so that gradually she found herself recovering her lost composure, and able to answer his few speeches coherently, whilst she wondered at the sense of rest that was stealing over her.

He walked with her to her lodgings, chatting more to Mrs. Danby than to the pale girl leaning upon his arm; and, just as he offered his hand in farewell, the hall-door opened, and Dunbar came out. He gave one swift, sootling glance at the trio, and passed on.

"Dunbar!" cried the poor young wife, "Dunbar, Mr. Gwynne has kindly brought me home!" but the great actor passed on in stony silence.

CHAPTER V.

On his return his manner was something more offensive. He was boiling over with jealousy of Trevor Gwynne, and fiercely forbade his pale young wife to hold any further intercourse with him. Remembering the words she had heard at the exhibition, Marigold was less meek than she usually was.

"Dunbar," she said quietly, but firmly, "not even for your sake will I treat my father's friends with discourtesy. It was by the merest chance I met Mr. Gwynne this morning; and seeing that I was fatigued, he kindly volunteered his escort, and Mrs. Danby was with me to act as chaperone."

With an oath he turned upon her.

"Mrs. Danby convives at your misconduct," he said, roughly. "She is in your pay."

The poor child's heart had been bruised and bleeding before; now it rose within her breast filled with wild indignation. Flashing upon him she demanded,—

"What do you mean? You must tell me now. It is my right to know."

"I mean that she helps you in every assignment."

"Stay!" she interrupted, quickly. "You can go too far with me. My patience is not without limit. I have been a loyal and loving wife, and I refuse utterly to submit to such

vile innuendoes as these. I have tried my utmost to please you in all things," and now the sweet young voice faltered; "and—and—oh, it is hard to fail so utterly! Dunbar, be kind to me. Of late I have not known how to bear my life."

He laughed brutally.

"Pon my soul, you would make an excellent actress! How you would 'fetch' the gods! But you ought to know by this time that I am not quite so easily moved; that I am quite aware my immaculate wife is not so immaculate as she seems."

Marigold was pale to the lips. Her hands trembled, and all her slight young form was shaken with emotion; but she contrived to articulate,—

"From to-day I will utter no protest, and plead with you no more! My heart you may break, my pride you may crush, but you never shall cast a slur upon my honour! That is the only good thing you have left me."

He started to his feet, enraged by her words.

"You play a high hand, madam," he shouted, "but I will be even with you yet. You cannot insult or defy me with impunity. From to-day, I utterly refuse to allow any visit to Trafalgar House, any junketings with Mrs. Danby; and see that I am obeyed, or it will be worse for you and Henry Fraser. Do you understand?" gripping her wrist fiercely.

"Perfectly," she answered, and looked him fully in the eyes, giving no sign of the pain she suffered.

"Then see I am obeyed. I am not to be trifled with."

"And I am not to be intimidated," and with that she wrenched her hands from his hold, and went to her room.

"That he should dare so to insult me," she said, as she paced to and fro, "what he should dare to place me on a level with the women it is a shame for me to speak of. Oh, my father! oh, my father! If I could but belong to you wholly—once again! If I could be as old, happy, innocent still! Oh, youth! youth! my youth!—where have you flown? What are the splendid promises you gave?" And when a moment she hid her face, and seemed as though she would weep. But pride restrained the passionate impulse, and she drew herself erect once more, whilst she prayed Heaven help her to do her duty towards the man who was making life so woe a burden to her.

"Forgive! forgive!" she moaned. "I do not love him any longer. He has killed all that was good or tender in me. Alas! alas! what shall I do? How shall I bear to live?"

She did not see Dunbar again that day; but at breakfast the next morning he informed her that a few friends would sup with them after the play, and that she was to provide a *recherché* meal.

She merely bowed, although her heart sank within her. She knew too well what these impromptu festivities were not to dread them; and yet when he was gone she began her preparations, intent upon doing her duty, because now love was impossible to her.

A little after noon a visitor was announced, one known to her only by name—an eminent *tragic-dienne*—a kindly, good woman yet on the sunny side of thirty.

"I do not know how to apologise for this intrusion," she said, taking Marigold's cold little hands in hers; "but I felt I must come to you; and you will not be too proud to accept advice from one several years your senior. I want you to promise that to-night, at least, you will spend at your father's house."

The sensitive, pale face grew paler yet. Dunbar had strictly forbidden her to visit her father. She was his wife, and must obey lest her father should suffer for her fault. So she said as firmly as she could,—

"There is no need for apology. I am sure you are actuated by some kindly motive, and I thank you; but my proper place to-night is at my husband's table."

"It is not when he brings guests here who would not be received in respectable society." "He would not degrade me," Marigold began, tremulously.

But the actress answered swiftly,—"You poor child! You do not yet know him! Why, he had audacity sufficient to ask me—me of all women—to meet others whose names I would scorn to take upon my lips. Let me take you to your father. Let me persuade you to free yourself at once and for ever from this man you call husband!"

"No, no!" Marigold said quickly, and a little coldly. "There is only one offence which would induce me to desert my husband. You speak in vain."

"Poor child! poor child!" the actress said, gently soothing that wealth of brown, bright hair. "I am sorry my mission has failed; but if you ever want a friend and I am living come to me. My heart aches for you. I have known like sorrows," and then she took her leave; and Marigold went miserably about her little duties, working in a mechanical fashion, and wondering dully if indeed Dunbar seriously meditated this vile insult.

As the time for his return drew near she dressed herself carefully, but with none of that pretty pride natural in a young wife. He had ceased to care how she looked or what she wore; and she—alas! alas! would now dread any affectionate demonstration on his part.

Towards midnight a noisy party entered the hall; and she rose, inwardly trembling, but outwardly firm.

The first to enter were two young men of fashion, escorting two dancers well-known to Marigold by sight and fame.

The blood leapt into the wife's pale cheeks, and she stood erect. She neither saw nor heeded the salutations offered. Her eyes were fixed upon the third and last couple—her husband and a petite fair woman, with a dimpled, babyish face and big blue eyes.

She was smiling up at Dunbar, and she wore such an air of innocence that few who saw her could believe she was Mrs. Collington, whose divorce had made so great a commotion, and who was fast driving her second husband to despair.

A pretty, childish little creature she seemed, with rings of yellow hair falling loosely about a white, infantile brow, with smiling, pouting, babyish lips. But Marigold knew her for what she was, and all her soul was in revolt. She had borne much. She would bear no more.

Dunbar Gorst brought her at once to this wife.

"Marigold, I have brought you a new acquaintance, Mrs. Collington. I hope you will soon be excellent friends."

Still she stood a moment, white and cold as a marble statue, and the infamous woman before her dared to offer her hand in greeting. Then Marigold stepped back.

"I refuse to receive Mrs. Collington. She understands why. To-night you will please dispense with my presence!"

He made a forward step, his hand raised threateningly, but Mrs. Collington caught and held it.

"Fah!" she said, with a pretty ringing laugh. "Why are you so angry? Is it Mrs. Gorst's fault that she was bred in an atmosphere of Puritanism. My dear madam, do not distress yourself over so small a thing as this; and in your absence I shall be delighted to fill the place you leave vacant!"

She laughed again, as she bent her languishing eyes upon one of the young men. He had the grace to turn away; and how heartily he wished himself out of Marigold's presence words would fail to tell.

She, poor child! recoiled from the evil-smiling woman as from some unclean animal; and gathering her skirts about her, as though fearful of contamination, she went from the room and up to her own chamber. There she dressed herself quickly in a dark hat and cloak, and coming down, found Mrs. Danby in the hall.

"Hush!" she said, in a strange, hard voice wholly unlike her own. "Do not let anyone know I have gone; but I can live this life no longer. I am going back to my father."

"But not alone, at this hour of the night? Poor child! oh, poor child! Wait but a moment, and I will go with you. The streets are unsafe at such a late hour."

"I am not afraid. Do not be anxious for me. I shall do nothing rash. I am going to my father, and to-morrow you will please send on such belongings as Mr. Gorst will permit. Good-bye, good-bye, and Heaven bless you for all your goodness to me."

Then utterly refusing to allow Mrs. Danby to accompany her, she went out into the dark, wet night.

It was a long walk from Mrs. Danby's to Trafalgar House, but no one molested her save an amorous policeman, who bade her an affectionate good-night, and she flitted through the streets a dark, slight, young figure, with her head bowed, so that those who met should not recognise her.

She came at last to Trafalgar House, and late as it was lights were still burning. The servant who admitted her looked surprised and aghast; but she was insensible to this as she passed him by with white cheeks and flaming eyes, mad with misery, and so came into her father's presence.

Trevor Gwynne was with him, but she did not even see him as she went rapidly forward and fell at Fraser's feet, crying,—

"Take me back again! Take me back again! I have left my husband for ever!"

The father would have raised her, but she resisted, and crouching at his feet, moaned out,—

"No, let me stay here. I cannot bear to look at you yet. Oh! this anguish of shame and sorrow will surely kill me!"

Trevor Gwynne rose quickly and went away. He could not bear to see Marigold's grief. He loved her so blindly, so vainly, he would willingly have suffered in her stead.

It must have been a dreadful thing which could induce her to leave Dunbar—she, with her high ideas of duty, her almost religious adherence to her marriage vows.

"I would we were face to face, he and I," he thought. "It is small mercy I should show him. My poor girl! my poor wronged little girl!"

Meanwhile, Marigold had ceased moaning; and when her father again attempted to raise her she made no further resistance, so he lifted her upon his knee, drawing her weary head upon his shoulder, whilst he said,—

"Tell me all that has happened. Hide nothing from me now. I must know exactly how matters stand if I am to help you in real earnest?"

She obeyed almost mechanically, being exhausted now by the passion of her grief, and the man's face grew dark as he listened. A dangerous light came into his brooding eyes, and under the heavy moustache the lips were set in a hard, almost cruel line.

When she had made an end of her sorrowful story he uttered no comment; but, lifting her as easily as a child, carried her up to what had been her own room before she left the safe shelter of that happy home.

"I will send Morrison to you," he said, "and just for to-night she had better share the room with you. I could not rest if you were alone. And, my dear one, try to sleep. You will want your strength for the coming fight."

He bowed his face upon hers a moment, and moved his hands as though he blessed her. Then, kissing her gently, he stole out and downstairs, to spend long hours brooding over Marigold's wrongs, and in planning ways and means of escape from Gorst without that awful publicity which would be as cruel as death to Marigold.

And the poor child lay hopelessly awake upon her bed, not moaning or crying any more. The fountain of her tears was dry. It would be long before she wept again.

Her heart felt hard and cold within her, and she was afraid of the wild thoughts that came to her. She shuddered as she realised her own changed feelings.

She was cold and sick now with aversion to her husband, and yet once he had been her idol.

Alas! alas! could anything be more cruel than this? Why could she not die away from and out of it all!

"I shall never be happy again," she thought, not dreaming that the future could hold any good for her; "and I am so young, so young! How shall I bear to live through all the dreary years to come?"

When morning dawned a message came to her from her father.

"Do not leave your room until I give you permission. I have sent for Gorst, and I will not allow you to meet him under my roof."

CHAPTER VI.

COMING down to a late breakfast Dunbar Gorst found Mrs. Danby waiting him.

She bowed coldly, and waited for him to be seated. Perhaps she felt as though he were at her mercy then. For he was a tall, powerfully-built man, and she was but a slender, fragile woman.

Gorst looked up uncomfortably, wondering why she remained, and conscious that there was much unpleasantness before him; but he asked, airily,—

"What is it, Mrs. Danby? Do you want any instructions concerning my wife's belongings? You are not on any account to forward them to Trafalgar House. She will be back in a day or two without doubt; and, in the meanwhile—"

"In the meanwhile," interrupted the landlady quietly, "I wish to give you notice, Mr. Gorst. Much as I esteem and love your lady I cannot consent to readmit her to my house if you are to remain."

"What do you mean, woman?" he shouted, savagely.

"This! That my house has always been a respectable one, and I will not have its reputation spoiled by you or the infamous crew you choose to bring here. I would have told you this last night, but I could not bring myself to enter a room which was defiled by Mrs. Collington's presence."

"How dare you take her name upon your lips?" he cried, springing to his feet. "Is this the way you speak of your superiors?"

She gave him a glance of utter contempt.

"I may be mistaken, of course; but I thought the world at large esteemed a woman divorced, because of her own iniquities, as the vilest creature under the sun. The error, if error it is, is a very natural one; and, Mr. Gorst, let me assure you I am not to be frightened by loud talking. A week from to-day your lunacy expires; and I hope, for my own sake, my next lodger will have the instincts of a gentleman and the heart of a man!"

With that she retired triumphing in her victory; and Dunbar, having lost all liking for the dainty meal before him, sat glowering out of the window, and wishing he had not gone quite so far; swearing that, if only to have revenge upon Marigold, he would bring her back to him, and compel her to receive Mrs. Collington as her guest and friend.

Then Henry Fraser's note was brought to him by an elderly servant, who eyed him sourly as she said,—

"The messenger waits," for all in the house loved and pitied Marigold.

Dunbar glanced carelessly over the impertinent summons. Then said,—

"Tell the fellow I will call upon Mr. Fraser when convenient."

"That's no answer," the woman retorted. "I want something plainer than that. I can't be running up and downstairs all day on your errands. There's gentlemen to be waited upon."

"Confound your infernal insolence!" he

said, and began to bluster; but the woman stood her ground calmly until his rage subsiding a little he muttered, "Say I will call immediately after rehearsal; and see that my things are put together. I shall not desecrate this virtuous abode by spending another night under its roof!" with what he thought savage irony.

"I'm sure I'm glad to hear it, sir," the woman answered, cheerfully. "You see, we ain't accustomed to any but respectable company here," and with a short laugh she left the room.

Then Dunbar went to the theatre.

"I wish I had not gone so far! I wish I had not gone so far!" he kept thinking. "But, anyway, I couldn't have lived much longer with her. Oh, to think I was ever fool enough to marry her!"

He was not in his usual form at rehearsal, and the two ballet-dancers who had shared his hospitality the previous night were the first to comment upon this, and to torment him with inquiries for his wife, to commiserate impudently with him upon the "lecture" he had evidently undergone; and Dunbar Gorst could never endure ridicule. So he set out for Trafalgar House in the maddest of moods, intent upon working his own evil will and pleasure.

A servant ushered him at once into the studio, where Henry Fraser was pretending to work, but he rose at once as the younger man entered and remained standing, waiting for Dunbar to speak.

This was not at all what the actor desired, but there was no help for it; so he said, bluntly,—

"Margold is with you? Tell her to get ready for walking. She has got to return with me."

Mr. Fraser was very white, but he kept his composure admirably.

"My daughter is at present in her own room, which she will not leave without my permission; and I utterly refuse to sanction any meeting between you."

"You have not the power to interfere between us," said Dunbar. "I have absolute and supreme control over my own wife. I believe that the law stands so."

"But the law also gives us our remedy. I would avoid scandal if I could, but to save my child from further wretchedness I will even endure that. Dunbar Gorst, for months I have known you for what you are; and foreseeing such a climax as this I have had you shadowed week in and week out by able detectives. There is scarcely an act of yours unknown to me. My daughter's redress is sure."

Gorst broke in violently.—

"You shall suffer for this! If you refuse me audience with my wife I will haunt the house (and the law allows so much to me), and annoy you in every possible way."

"Of that I have not the least doubt. Still I dare you to do the worst. No!" as Gorst started threateningly forward, "do not attempt violence. If you lay a finger upon me, as sure as Heaven is above us, I'll murder you!"

He looked quite capable of it then, with his white, calm face and flaming eyes; and Dunbar was wise enough to heed his warning so far as to refrain from personal violence.

"Look here," he said, coarsely, "let us have a truce to this nonsense. If your daughter cares to return to me without any fuss folks need be none the wiser concerning her mad freak. If not, well, I shall resort to forcible measures."

"I think not. So sure as you molest or seek to intimidate her into compliance with your wishes I commence legal warfare against you. Out of this house into your keeping she shall not go! Silence a moment. I am not to be scared by tall talk; and as you have long since ceased to care for your most unhappy wife I am at a loss to know why you should so insist upon her return."

"I want my revenge for many an insult I

have suffered at your hands, and I know that nothing will so hurt you as your daughter's misery! And she—curse her!—would rather die than live under the same roof with me. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly; and like Virginius of old, I think I could rather kill her with my own hand than consign her again to your keeping. Sit down, and hear me out;" and as Dunbar obeyed, unable to resist that touch of command in voice and manner, he went on, "I think you will agree with me that my position is an assured one; that I have the esteem of all who know me, and of yourself you cannot say the same. You depend for your livelihood upon your popularity, and a breath may blow that away. I can, if I choose, smite you hip and thigh, and in my child's interests I shall not scruple to do so. You had far better accept my terms, and leave her in peace."

Dunbar Gorst listened frowningly, and when the speaker ceased was still silent, whilst he pondered over the pros and cons of the case. Finally he said,—

"What are your terms?"

"If you will agree to give her into my charge, never to make any claim upon her, or endeavour to meet and accost her, I will allow you the sum of five hundred per annum."

"Not enough, old man, not enough. Make it eight."

"Not another farthing, and to a man of your extravagant habits the sum I name would not be an inconsiderable item."

Dunbar rose.

"If those are your terms I refuse to accept them."

"Then the law may take its course. Good morning," answered the artist, and Dunbar walked to the door. There he paused irresolutely, and came a step nearer his antagonist.

"You'll say six hundred and fifty. To you it's a mere trifle."

"Five hundred. Not another farthing," reiterated Fraser.

"Very well. Then all negotiations between us are at an end. I take my wife with me."

"You'll not do that. And even if she should be mad enough to return to you you will find her a burden and not a help to you. From the hour she casts in her lot with you, I stop all supplies. You may think this an idle threat! I can assure you it is not. And let me add that your present course of life is not calculated to enhance your value to your manager, or allow you long to hold the proud position of public favourite. You begin to show signs of debauchery, Dunbar Gorst. Two nights ago you were not even word perfect in your part. It was given out you were seriously indisposed. Not a word was said of that very hilarious dinner at Twickenham, or of the quantities of champagne consumed!"

"Curse you!" cried the other. "You know everything!"

Fraser smiled quietly.

"I know enough to enable me to protect my child from a villain. Come for the last time, do you close with my offer?"

His longing for revenge was great, but his love of money was greater. So, after a short, sharp struggle with himself he said, sulkily,—

"I agree; and I'll take the first instalment now."

"I expected no other. Wait! Spencer" (Mr. Fraser's lawyer) "is in the next room, waiting the issue of this interview. The deed is already drawn up, and two of the servants will witness. In dealing with—with scoundrels, one is compelled to take certain precautions," and he rang the bell, standing in silence by the mantel until the lawyer and two men-servants appeared.

"It's all right, Spencer. Mr. Gorst has surrendered at discretion."

"Very wise of him, too," smiled the dapper little man. "It saves a deal of bother and scandal. It is to your advantage, sir, not to lose your prestige with the ladies, ahem!"

and he coughed behind his hand in the slightest possible manner.

"What the d— do you mean?" Gorst broke out, violently.

"Nothing, my good sir, nothing; only if the truth should leak out, I am afraid the fair sex cannot continue to regard you as a hero! And now suppose we get to business," and he smiled airily over the actor's discomfiture.

The necessary signatures were soon affixed, the servants dismissed, and there was no longer any need for Gorst to stay. He took up his hat and turned to go.

"It is your day now," he said, under his breath. "Mine will come soon, and then you shall repent this morning's work to the hour of your death. I will bring you down to the dust, and humble the woman I call wife to the very earth!"

Fraser sprang forward, but the lawyer restrained him.

"No violence! You promised me that," he said, and the artist was feign to content himself with shouting after his smiling, mocking foe,—

"Get out of this, you scoundrel; or, by Heaven, I'll kick you out!"

A little later he went up to his daughter's room. She was lying white and still upon her bed, her eyes wide with suspense and fear.

"Oh! father, he has gone. I heard the hall door close, and I am with you yet. Tell me what he said and did? And, oh, father! oh, father! do not send me back to him!"

"Lie still and listen, dear heart. Dunbar Gorst will never trouble you again. I have bought his promise to that effect."

And then he told her all the shameful story, whilst she listened with covered eyes and shuddering form. And when he had finished she said, in a stricken tone,—

"I—I did not think he valued me so greatly. I did not think he would demand so high a price for such a poor piece of property as his wife!"

And then she laughed in a strange way, and a red spot burned on either cheek, until her father put his arms about her, and kissed her tremulous lips. A softer look changed the whole character of her face.

"Dearest father, I am selfish to trouble you so greatly; but—but after to-day I will devote myself to you, and together we shall be happy. Oh, yes! we shall be happy soon," and so she laid her arms about his neck, and rested in the safe shelter of his embrace.

In the evening Trevor Gwynne called, seeing Mr. Fraser only.

"I am glad you have come," said the latter. "There is a subject upon which I must speak to you. You know what manner of man Gorst is, and how glad he would be to revenge himself upon my poor child for her renunciation of him. You know, too, he always nursed a ridiculous jealousy of you, and would be glad of the merest shadow of excuse for his past conduct. This world of ours is a nice, charitable world, and looks askance at a woman separated from her husband. So I must beg you, so long as Mrs. Gorst remains with me, to discontinue your visits."

"Sir! do you mean you have lost confidence in me too? That you are afraid she might grow to—oh, haugit! I can't utter the words. They would make me appear such an utter cad!"

"Trevor, don't you know me better than to believe such a thought as either you suggest could enter my mind? No, no, my boy, it is not that; but the breath of slander shall never dim the brightness of my darling's virtue and name, whilst Heaven gives me strength to ward it off. You are not angry?"

"No; but it is very hard. Only for her sake you shall be obeyed."

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIETY was neither shocked nor startled when it heard of the rupture between Mr. and Mrs. Gorst. The wise ones said they had long

known a separation was inevitable, and publicity was with Marigold, although a great many sentimental misses still believed in their self-created hero, and pitied him that he was burdened with an uncongenial wife. Men about town, too, said,—

"Hang it! did the girl think she could marry a Galahad? and where was the wonder if Gorst kicked over the traces, because everyone knew Fraser had brought up his daughter like a Paritan?"

And presently it oozed out from some unknown channel that Mrs. Collington was the last bone of contention between the ill-mated pair; and society smiled, shrugged its shoulders, and wondered what the husband would do.

Poor Collington was a weak-minded fellow, and when he fell a victim to his wife's charms had known nothing of her antecedents. Learning them, he continued to live with her, although discarded by all his friends. Honestly he loved her, honestly he forgave her; but he could not trust her.

He had the instincts of a gentleman, and the pride too; so that when he learned the truth concerning his wife, life became a torment to him.

He found himself watching her every action, suspecting her every look and word, and knowing this she did not seek in any way to please him—rather did her best to augment his trouble.

She had never loved him, and had only married him in the hope that through his agency she should once more effect an entrance into society, for he was of good family. But in this attempt she had utterly failed, and so was sore against him.

Perhaps in all her wicked life no man had so appealed to her fancy as Dunbar Gorst; and when the rumour of her share in the scene at Mrs. Danby's reached Collington's ears, and he forbade her to exchange speech again with the actor, she was furious.

But with inherent cunning she hid this—was so apparently submissive to him, so timidly affectionate, so grieved that she should cause dissension between husband and wife, that the poor, weak-minded gentleman believed her, and took up cudgels in her defence.

She wrote a little note to Dunbar, asking him not to attempt a meeting until she had effectually allayed Mr. Collington's suspicions.

Then she was seen with him in all places of resort, until the more kindly folks began to say, surely there was no truth in the report concerning her and the actor; that she was apparently a most devoted wife, and so on.

Then she was always so cheerful, so ready to spend the long evenings in her husband's society alone, that presently he was lulled into a sense of security.

And when a telegram reached him from his father, then residing in the south of Italy, praying him to go to him at once, as he was dying, he began to pack with scarcely a thought of what his wife might do in his absence.

"I am sorry you are not included in this invite, Cara," he said. "It must be an oversight."

"No!" she answered humbly, and with down-dropped lids, "but you must not be angry. I could not expect they would remember or receive me. I do not blame them."

"Poor little Cara!" he said, with an arm about her pretty plump waist; "but you know that I love you! And what will you do when I am away?"

"Think of you oftener than you will believe. But I shall not write you!"

"Not write!" he echoed, in accents of surprise and dismay.

"I shall telegraph instead from time to time," she answered, with her prettiest smile, "because so my news will reach you the quicker!"

He regarded her with suspicion.

"You are not giving me the real reason,"

he said, hoarsely. "Oh, great Heaven, if I could trust you!"

And then she laid her head upon his breast, and wept, or seemed to weep, that he should so doubt and misjudge her. She spoke to him in honeyed words, until the poor fond wretch prayed forgiveness for his suspicions, and left her more madly in love than before.

She laughed as she watched him go. She had no pity, no truth, this lovely, smiling woman with the babyish face and candid eyes; and when she knew he was well away she went out to meet her lover. The servant Collington most trusted was her own creature, bribed by her to secrecy, and there was no one to warn him of coming dishonour.

She had flown with Dunbar Gorst four days before society knew it. His engagement was ended, and her wealth would take them abroad. The servant who had been her mistress's chief ally from time to time despatched telegrams to Collington, apparently from his wife, assuring him of her safety, her well-being and her love, begging him not to leave his father whilst he was any comfort to him, for the old man lingered longer than had been thought possible by the medical men.

It came with electric force upon society that Dunbar Gorst had flown with Mrs. Collington, casting fame and position to the winds. Fraser felt a thrill of almost unholy triumph, because now Marigold was practically free. He went to her—she had already heard the news; but though she was white as snow she was perfectly calm. She had suffered too long and too sorely to give much sign of emotion.

Her father took her hand,—

"My dear," he said, "I have always set my face against divorce, in my blindness believing a woman, however innocent, issues from such an ordeal less womanly than before. But the sorrow that has come to us has made me wiser. You have your redress in your hands now. Will you take it?"

"No, oh, no!" she answered, with strong shuddering. "The publicity would kill me. Let my wrongs be all forgotten. Let me live for you, and you alone!" and he would not say more upon the subject then or after.

At the close of a month Collington returned to England, having buried his father, and he reached home in a state of happy ignorance concerning his wife's dreadful sin.

But when he heard the truth he was like a madman, swearing to have revenge upon Gorst and the woman he had loved to his own undoing.

He started that very night in pursuit of the fugitives. Their trail was easy to find and easy to follow, for Gorst had taken no trouble to conceal his movements.

They had gone through Spain, from thence to France, and on again to Germany, where they halted long enough for the outraged husband to all but come up with them.

Then Mrs. Collington, who was erratic in all her movements, proposed a flight to Switzerland. So to Switzerland they went, all unconscious that Nemesis, in the form of Everard Collington, was dogging all their steps.

It was close to Chamounix that he came upon them. They had a guide with them, and Gorst was the last of the trio.

Collington had traversed the same path often in his early days, and knew almost every step of the precipitous way; and a fierce joy shot through his heart at the thought that his rival was at his mercy.

He could have shouted aloud in his triumph, only that would have been to defeat his own purpose. So he stole softly—softly along the beaten way, creeping nearer and nearer to his intended victim.

His face was white as the face of one dead; his eyes blazed with strange fire, and his heart throbbed so loudly that he thought Gorst must hear and turn.

But he was laughing gaily, and never heeded anything but the bright little form preceding him. Now Collington was so near that by

stretching out his hand he could have touched the other, but still he made no sign; only all in a moment he drew so close—so close—that Gorst, becoming uneasily conscious of another's presence, veered quickly round, and in that moment, with a wild cry, Collington was upon him.

"Gentlemen, forbear," entreated the guide. "Back, madame, back," and the guilty woman fell upon her knees shrieking wildly.

She dared not plead for mercy from her injured husband, she dared not stretch out her hand to help her lover; but her wild eyes watched them in that fearful struggle. It was soon ended. Just a moment or two they swayed backwards and forwards, drawing ever nearer the verge of the precipice.

They were both strong men, and the issue was uncertain. Then, all in a flash, Collington had his rival in his arms, and made as though to fling him over the brink; but with the awful strength of despair Gorst clung to him. Just whilst one might draw a breath, they hovered uncertainly on the edge; then with one awful mutual cry they disappeared—and all was silent.

After awhile the guide ventured to look over; then, with a deep shudder, he turned to the crouching woman.

"Come, madame," he said, gently, "all is over."

She lifted her lovely vacant face to his; her blue eyes wandered uncertainly around. Then she laughed—such a pitiful, unmeaning laugh—and tendered him her hand.

"We will go home," she said. "It is cold here, it is cold here!"

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated the guide, "the shock has deprived her of her reason, the poor soul! ah, the poor soul!"

He led her carefully back to the chalet, she babbling all the while of incongruous things, and folks who had figured in her past life; and when a few days had gone by a relative came and took her away.

She lived many years after, but she never recovered her senses, and as a harmless lunatic, with rich and influential friends, much licence was allowed her by the authorities of the sanatorium, from which she would never issue, save when they bore her, feet foremost, to her last resting-place. The bodies of Dunbar Gorst and Everard Collington were never recovered.

And when the news came to England Henry Fraser succumbed to the shock. Joy had done for him what grief could never do, and he lay helpless upon his bed, struck down by paralysis.

Then it was that Marigold could, in a measure, repay all his love and goodness by her devotion to him. She could feel no grief at Dunbar's death, but the circumstances of it shocked her beyond measure. And often as she bent over her father's prostrate form she prayed "Heaven grant he had time for repentance. Heaven forgive as I forgive him."

And when Henry Fraser was well enough to be moved they went southwards to a quiet little village, where gradually health and comparative strength came to the artist. But both he and Marigold knew he would never wield a brush again.

After long months Trevor Gwynne began to make frequent journeys to that Cornish village; and when Marigold saw his tender care, of his hearty reverence for her father, his utter self-forgetfulness, she began to wonder how she could have so lightly esteemed him in the past—to look for his coming with more eagerness than she would confess even to herself.

And when Dunbar had been dead some two years he went to her, flushed with triumph.

"Congratulate me," he said, as he caught her hand. "My picture is the picture of the year, and Lord Barmore has offered me a thousand pounds for it!"

"You deserve your success," she answered, blushing, as her eyes met his. "May to-day be the first of many proud and happy days for you!"

"Will you help me to make my future proud and happy?" he asked.

The flush died from her face, leaving her very pale.

"How can I help you?" she questioned.

"By coming to me as my love, my wife. You do love me a little, Marigold?"

"But," she said, under her breath, "do you forget all the past when you were less than nothing to me, and he was all?"

"I will try to forget it if you will bid me. Marigold, what will you do?"

Then something of her old impulsiveness returned to her.

"Whatever you wish; for oh! Trevor, Trevor, I love you!"

Would it not be a shame to record how then he acted?

There were happy days and happy years before them—days so glad, years so long and bright, that they half forgot the passing time. And Marigold thought less and less of her early trials, blest as she was in the love of husband and children, glad to minister to her father's needs, for Henry Fraser yet lives—weak and bowed down, it is true—but very happy in the midst of that happy circle—very proud of the son-in-law, who, despite of the great masters and his own genius, maintains stoutly that he, Henry Fraser, is the greatest.

[THE END.]

FACILE.

A MAN'S repentance is always the size of the whip produced.

THERE are writers who fancy they are luminous when they are only voluminous.

THE man who endorses notes is likely to be "taken for his friend."

A WOMAN has been known to bend a man's will during life and break it after his death.

THE most useful thing in the long run—Breath.

IN ancient times kissing a pretty girl was a cure for headache. It is difficult to improve upon some of those old-time remedies.

YOU can't teach an old dog new tricks. If you can make him get rid of some of his old ones, you are mighty lucky.

WHY is a fellow who has nothing to boast of but his pedigree like a potato? Because the only good belonging to him is underground.

A MAN always feels a great deal sicker when the doctor has called his disease by a high-sounding and unfamiliar Latin name.

DO not try to take off your hat to a woman on a rainy day. If she carries an umbrella, she will take it off for you.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER (sternly): "Where do boys go to who fish on the holy Sabbath day?" Very Small Johnny (triumphantly): "I know. Down to McCullum's Cove."

MULLIGAN: "Take some of the medicine, Mary Ann. The doctor said it would either kill or cure without fail." Mrs. Mulligan: "Arrah, but which will it do first?"

SMITHS (angrily): "Do you know that your chickens come over in my yard?" SNAKES: "I supposed that they did, for they never come back again."

AN afflicted woman writes: "It is hard to be a good sunny Christian when one has to struggle against both sin and indigestion!" and she has many sympathizers.

CUSTOMER: "You said these stockings were fast black. They are all faded out." DEALER: (a retired anarchist): "Main Guncious! You must haf washed 'em."

"Noo! Sandy, my man, when are you going to give up whisky drinking?" "Oh, whisky drinking," Sandy studying, replied, "A weel, not as long as barley grows."

TRAMP: "Hem! Good-mornin, mam. Nice dog you have, mum. What d'ye call him?" HOUSEKEEPER: "He'll go to you without calling, quick as I loose this chain."

FRAGTIOUS man (about to enter a tramcar on a wet day): "Is Noah's ark quite full?" PASSENGER: "All but the donkey; step in, sir."

"WHY do you always say 'Thank you' when the Baron von Filzeek goes away without giving you any tip?" "So that the other people shall not think that he hasn't."

WHAT DELAYED HER.—"You're very late in returning from church; you must have had a long sermon." "Oh, yes; Dr. Sixtaby gave us a great discourse on the 'Evil of Talking Too Much.'"

A MAN who has been travelling in the "far West" says—but he probably misrepresents the matter—that when an Idaho girl is kissed she indignantly exclaims, "Now put that right back where you took it from!"

AN Irish editor recently wrote a eulogium in which this sentence occurred: "A great Irishman has passed away. God grant that many as great, and who shall as wisely love their country, may follow him!"

RECOGNIZED AT LAST.—"Did you recognise your wife at the masquerade ball last night?" "Not until I patted her on the shoulder, and she whispered to me: 'Lemmel, don't make a fool of yourself, you old donkey.'"

MAGISTRATE: "The charge against you, sir, is assault and battery." DENNIS: "Thin, yer hanner, ye have mixed me wid somewan else. Sure, Oi were arrested for peonagin' Dan Monihan on the bid wid a pavin' stone."

MABEL: "Papa, Carlyle speaks in his French Revolution of soldiers and sans-culottes. What is that in English?" MR. REDANT: "Without trousers, dear." MABEL: "Oh, I see! It's French for Highlanders!"

ANXIOUS MOTHER: "I am afraid Johnny is sick." FATHER: "My goodness! What does he complain of?" ANXIOUS MOTHER: "He hasn't begun to complain yet; but I forgot to lock the jam closet to-day, and there isn't a bit missing."

NEW problem for acting managers: Visitor (at pay-box): "I suppose you'll pass in this boy-half price?" "Why? You don't mean to say he's under twelve?" "No, he's sixteen; but he's blind of one eye, and can't see more than half the show."

FATHER: "Dash the cats, they won't let a man read a moment in peace." BEBBY: "Why do you say that, pa?" "Well, I ought not to swear, but they are an awful worry." "Well, p'raps you'd be, pa, if you was full of fiddle-strings."

LITTLE ROGER: "What makes you walk lame, Uncle John?" Uncle John: "There was an accident on the bridge to-day, and I got caught in the jam." Little Roger: "I got caught in the jam once, and walked lame for a week."

DAUGHTER: "Nobody cares for me, mother. I can never get married; I am too homely." MOTHER: "No matter, dear. Your rich aunt, who has remembered you in her will, can't live much longer, and then you will have plenty of suitors."

A YOUNG lady advertised for a maid. One applied, and in response to the inquiry whether she was quick, she replied: "Oh, so quick that I will engage to dress you every day in half-an-hour." "In half-an-hour!" reiterated the young lady; "and what will I do the rest of the day?"

A TEACHER desiring to classify her pupils put questions to them to find out how much they knew. During the examination of the son of a leading Austin politician the following dialogue occurred: "You say that there are three kingdoms—the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral." "Yes, sir." "Now, where do you put the sugar?" "Pa puts it in the water and then the whisky in afterwards, and stirs 'em up with a spoon."

"HAVEN't you forgotten something, sir?" asked the head porter of a guest who had paid his bill and was leaving the hotel. "Oh, no," replied the non-tipper; "if I have you can keep it." "Much obliged! I notice you left your pocket-book lying on the desk."

WIFE: "What seems to be the matter with my husband, doctor?" DOCTOR: "Oh, nothing more than an attack of rheumatism in the pedal extremities." WIFE: "Ah, it is worse than I expected. Charley said the pain was all in his feet."

A LADY, in passing up a church aisle, caught her dress on a corner of a pew and tore it. As the process of tearing was very audible to the congregation, the feelings of the lady may be imagined when, at that moment, the clergyman began the service by reading the sentence: "Band your hearts and not your garments!"

A CLECTIONMAN who left a notice in his pulpit to be read by the preacher who exchanged with him neglected to denote carefully a private postscript, and the congregation were astonished to hear the stranger wind up by saying, "You will please come to dine with me at the parsonage."

LITTLE JAMES had been imparting to the minister the important and cheerful information that his father had got a new set of false teeth. "Indeed, James?" replied the minister, indulgently. "And what will he do with the old set?" "Oh, I s'pose," replied little James, "they'll cut 'em down and make me wear 'em."

"YOUNG MAN," said a stern parent, with the accent on the young, "do you intend to stay here all night holding my daughter's hand and looking her in the eyes like a sick calf?" "No, sir." "What do you intend to do, then?" "Well, I had thought when you did us the kindness to retire I would pay my arm round her waist, and if she did not object too forcibly, I might risk a kiss."

"WILLIAM, will you remain home to-night and mind the baby? I want to go to a lecture with Mrs. Gadder." "With the greatest of pleasure, my dear. By the way, I notice that the new maid you engaged this morning is decidedly good-looking, and—" "William, I was only joking about going to the lecture. I shall remain at home and mind baby myself. I couldn't trust him with you."

PEDDLER: "Madam, I am introducing a new kind of soap." MADAM: "I don't want it." PEDDLER: "It costs but half as much as the old—" MADAM: "I don't want it, I tell you." PEDDLER: "And does twice the work of—" MADAM: "Don't want it. Get out." PEDDLER: "Of any other kind, and is excellent for the complexion." MADAM: "How much is it?"

MADAM comes home from the theatre and finds Minna (the servant) sitting in the kitchen reading a book by the light of two candles. She is very naturally annoyed at the girl's extravagance. "Why, Minna, actually reading novels with two candles burning?" "Not at all, ma'am," was the cool reply; "that's only one candle. I just cut it in two halves an hour ago."

AN Irishman in Liverpool, being hard-up for work, took a walk down one of the quays to see if he could pick up a job. Seeing a captain standing on the deck of a sailing vessel, he addressed him: "Troth, captain, an' do ye want any sailors?" "Were you ever at sea before, my man?" inquired the captain. "Och," answered Pat, "an' do ye think I came over from Orliland in a coal-cart?"

EVELYN (her visiting cousin): "Now, then, tell all about him. Who is he? Where is he? And what is he? I'm just dying to learn all about your engagement!" MISS W.: "Well, then, in the first place, he is a pharmacist, and—" Evelyn: "Why, that's strange, dear! And you always were such a girl for London and its gaities, too. But how jolly it will be, of course, to visit you both at the farm!"

SOCIETY.

The Lord Mayor is the first Harrow boy who has filled the office of Chief Magistrate.

The coffin of the King of Holland weighed just nine hundredweight. The undertaker ordered the new Dutch metre and the old one, and made the coffin twice the required size. The error was discovered too late to change it.

The latest form of masculine-feminine giddiness is for lace-trimmed cravats. A man's made-up cravat is purchased and trimmed with lace to match the costume.

The Queen has given a conditional promise that she will visit Portsmouth Dockyard early in February, and preside at the launching of the Royal Sovereign and the Centaur.

BUSINESS-LIKE New York ladies are beginning to use stretchers to keep their skirts from getting "knee'd" just as men use them to keep their trousers from getting baggy!

The cold weather affects the Queen favourably rather than otherwise, and drives in an open carriage have been the daily rule since the return of the Court to Windsor.

It is pleasant to know, in view of the ever-growing demands upon the strength of the Princess of Wales, that Her Royal Highness is better than she has been for a year past.

GENERAL BOWEN, in his book, "In Darkest England," says, "Out of every five persons in London, one dies either in the hospitals, asylums, or workhouses."

Early next year the journey from London to Berlin will be shortened by more than an hour. The Great Eastern, which has done so much to cheapen Continental travelling, intends starting a new daily service between Harwich and Hook van Holland.

At a great feast, in the year 1661, there was a competition for the best dish sent to table, and the cook of Sir George Goring took the cake "with four huge brown pigs, piping hot, litted and harrowed with ropes of sausages, all tied to a monstrous bag pudding."

The cosy and prettily-decorated show-rooms of society milliners are becoming a favourite rendezvous for West-end ladies. They are the feminine and nineteenth-century edition of the coffee-houses of the days of Steele and Addison.

A snapper-bag-gown once had the name of an economy, but at present date holds its own among the best. The dark background throws up spangles, coloured spots, flowers, jewels, indeed all adornments, in such effective wise; and oftimes makes the wearer a more distinguished object than paler-skinned women.

Everyone to whom Princess Christian has shown herself by her unvarying amiability and kindness will learn with official good wishes of the betrothal of Her Royal Highness's youngest daughter, Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein, to Prince Albert, the third surviving son of the Duke of Aosta-Demau.

It has been a subject of general remark at Sandringham, how well the Prince of Wales is looking just now; he is not like the same man he was eighteen months ago. At that time he seemed unaccountably careworn, anxious and depressed; now he looks the picture of brisk cheerfulness, and throws himself with keen zest into whatever amusement comes in his way.

The Prince is a model husband, and contrives in the most unobtrusive fashion to surround the Princess, as it were, with a halo of delicate attention. This is particularly noticeable when they are staying together in any country house; then, in a very decided way the Prince allows it to be understood, that, under all circumstances, the wishes of the Princess are the first thing to be considered.

STATISTICS.

The crown of England is worth £120,000.

Over 4,800 marriages take place in England weekly.

Three and a half millions of people are always on the seas of the world.

It is estimated that there are one hundred million of people in Europe who do not eat meat more than once a week.

A woman's work in Birmingham comprises, among its various results, the fabrication of 14,600,600 pens, 6,000 bedsteads, 7,000 guns, 800,000,000 cut nails, 100,000,000 buttons, 1,000 saddles, 5,000,000 copper or bronze coins, 20,000 pairs of spectacles, and over £30,000 worth of jewellery.

GEMS.

We make our fortunes, and we call them fate.

One cannot always be a hero, but one may always be a man.

It is always safe to do right; and the truest expediency is simple justice.

A pound of energy with an ounce of talent, will achieve greater results than a pound of talent with an ounce of energy.

Troubles spring from idleness, and grievous toils from needless ease. Many without labour would live by their wits, but they break for want of stock.

The true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast—all clashing of opinion or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or resentment, or gloom; his great concern being to make everyone at his ease and at home.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CAROLE PUDDING.—Beat eight eggs with half a pound of sugar, half a pound of butter, and the juice of one lemon. Line a deep dish with puff paste, cover with quince preserves, pour over a little of the mixture, lay on more preserves, then more of the mixture and preserves. Bake and eat with sauce.

PARENT FRITTERS.—Remove the skins from hot parsnips. Mash, add one tablespoonful of butter, one teaspoonful of salt, and one salt-spoonful of pepper. Make into flat cakes. Roll in flour and brown in hot butter. Pour medium-sized parsnips are used. Cover with boiling water. It requires about forty minutes usually to boil them. These fritters are particularly nice.

PARKIN BISCUITS.—1 lb. flour, 1 lb. oatmeal, 1 lb. treacle, 1 oz. butter or lard, 1 oz. sugar, 1 teaspoonful baking soda, 1 teaspoonful ginger. Mix all the dry things in a basin, and melt the treacle and butter together, and stir them in among the dry things. Mix well and take it up in pieces. Roll these round, then flatten them in the hand, and put them on an oven tin. Stick half an almond on the top, and bake gently till firm. Fine oatmeal is best. They burn very easily.

A NICE BREAKFAST DISH.—Cut slices from any cold baked meat, dip in beaten egg, then dust with bread crumbs, and fry brown in butter, or part butter and part pork fat. Take slices of dry bread, dip in a custard made by beating one egg and one cup of milk together, and fry quickly in a spider well greased with butter. A slice of meat can be placed on each slice of toast, or served on separate dishes as preferred. A little parsley as a garnish for the meat makes it more tempting.

MISCELLANEOUS.

AMERICAN railways would reach half way to the moon.

The cotton crop in Egypt is said to be the largest ever harvested.

Pure air in the stable is as essential to the health of horses as pure food or pure water.

Every twenty-four hours a man, even if he be a teetotaler, will drink in 10,000 quarts of air.

A NICKEL IN THE SLOT soda fountain has been invented. The customer helps himself, but can't get more than five cents' worth.

The constant use of the telephone produces impaired hearing, headache, and nervous excitability.

There is an old saying to the effect that every time a cock crows a lie is being told somewhere in the world.

It takes three pounds of grapes to make one pound of raisins. It also takes three weeks of dry weather to make raisins.

A LARGE number of carriages in cities are now supplied with rubber-tires to prevent violent jolting and deafening chatter.

FATAL maladies may lurk in a filthy watering trough. Watering vessels should be thoroughly scrubbed out every few days.

The National Library in Paris contains two million five hundred thousand volumes. It is said to be the largest library in the world.

There are over three thousand named varieties of apples known to fruit growers and nurserymen; besides many unnamed seedlings.

A MEMORIAL is to be erected in Heligoland on the spot on which the Emperor stood when formally taking possession of the island.

A NEW automatic machine used for stamping in the New York Post Office will cancel, postmark, count and stack letters and postal cards at the rate of twenty-five thousand per hour.

It is suggested that the numerous fires in steamers carrying cargoes of frozen meat with charcoal packings may be caused by the spontaneous combustion of charcoal.

The Manchester ship canal is thirty-five miles long, and will accommodate the largest merchantmen afloat. It will be opened for traffic in less than a year.

PROFESSOR MARSH has made an estimate, based on careful analysis, that the proportion of Anglo-Saxon words in the English Bible is 97 per cent. of the whole.

LIFE ASSURANCE was introduced into this country by a few Episcopalian clergymen who formed a society in 1769. The first public assurance company was established in 1812.

A TUNNEL to Prince Edward's Island, across Northumberland Straits, a distance of six miles, is the next great engineering feat talked of in Canada.

THE Siamese have great regard for odd numbers, and insist on having an odd number of windows, doors and rooms in their houses and temples. There must be an odd number of feet in the stairs and an odd number of feet in the height of all steeples and minarets.

THE romance of diamond mining is all gone. It is now a matter of excavating vast beds of blue clay by machinery, washing and lifting out the diamonds, which, after being roughly sorted for size, are sold in bulk by weight. The men who do the actual work are mere labourers, and their pay is small.

A SHOE that is too wide does about as much damage to the foot as a too narrow one, but it works its mischief in a different way. The narrow shoe injures the foot by cramping it out of shape; the broad shoe permits the foot to flatten out immoderately. Some persons argue that if no shoes at all are better for the feet, then a broad shoe is the next best thing. But they fail to take into account the matter of friction in the loose shoe, by which the foot is chafed while walking. No shoes at all would be better than those that are too tight.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. S. S.—The lessee of Dury Lane is the Sheriff.

R. C.—You can only make inquiries at the War Office.

THE READER.—You have no claim on the man, and the sooner you are rid of him the better.

LOTTA.—So-and-so's "entire," meaning the un-reduced, unmixt, genuine brew of the firm.

W. S.—The *Surfidge* foundered off the Isle of Wight on March 34, 1873.

PURKLED.—Pre-Victorian gold coins are not now legal tender.

J. THOMAS.—A will is really required to be proved within six months, but it may be proved afterwards.

UPWARDS.—The only way you can attain to the position is by enlisting as a private, and working up.

T. JONES.—The Church of England does not receive any grant from the Government.

ARLES.—Any bookseller can get you copies of Acts of Parliament. Usually they cost only a few pence.

JIMMY.—Henry Wainwright was sentenced to death on December 1, 1876, for the murder of Harriet Lane.

TARVIN.—A death warrant is signed by the judge who has presided at the trial.

MARY.—The custody of an illegitimate child belongs to the mother.

WARWICK JOE.—The City of Birmingham is entirely in the county of Warwick.

F. STUART.—All lotteries (except Art Unions licensed by the Privy Council) are illegal in this country.

IGNORANT.—The grampus is a cetacean, closely akin to the porpoise, but much larger.

GEORGE.—A young man is not obliged to contribute to the support of his stepfather.

FIERMIN.—A leach is three, a brace is two. Leach comes from *latus*, the French for a strap.

F. PHELAR.—The word vinegar is from the French *vinigre*, sour wine, from *vin*, wine, and *igre*, sour.

JEROME.—A mayor during his year of office, and for one year after, is a magistrate, and can, of course, sit as such at any petty sessions courts that are held in his borough.

VINTA.—The dog-tax in 1866 was 12s. In 1867 an Excise duty of 8s. was imposed in its place, and this was increased to 7s. 6d. in 1878.

MOTHER ANK.—A little salt sprinkled over a mustard plaster will enable the patient to keep it on for hours without much suffering.

DEMYSTER.—Physicians say that cases of nervous prostration are less frequent since low heels have come into general use.

WANTS TO KNOW.—Lee was tried for the Babbscombe murder, 14th November, 1884; the abortive attempt to hang him occurred on 23rd February, 1885.

FAY.—Mr. Sims Reeves has often sung in opera, more particularly in "Guy Rannering" and "Lucia di Lammermoor."

ONE IN TROUBLE.—A daughter is not liable to contribute towards the support of her parents if they become chargeable to the parish.

T. G. C.—It is almost impossible for a man to sleep after severe mental exertion, and it is almost impossible for one to resist sleep after severe physical exertion.

CONVIANT READER.—A tenant may, on removing, take away gas chandeliers, brackets, etc., for which he has paid; but he cannot take the gas-supply pipes away.

ALICE.—Yes; you can institute affiliation proceedings within twelve months of the birth of the child, or of the last payment on its account.

ARMSTRONG.—Mr. Samuel Brown lost an arm in the Indian Mutiny. He is probably the officer of whom you are thinking.

INSURED ONE.—There is no reason why a lady should not institute a breach of promise action against a cousin; but the question of her success depends upon the strength of her case.

TUESY.—All three of the young ladies are pretty. The one in the vignette has a specially interesting face. The lady with the curls should be very clever. She has a fine head. The third is handsome, with very fine eyes.

L. R. (Greenwich).—There is not a book on the influence of music, though the subject is incidentally referred to in most treatises upon music itself. You had better read up in an encyclopedia.

MRS H.—If you require a servant for your convenience to leave a fortnight before her notice expires she is entitled to her wages for the whole term, and an allowance for her support during the fortnight.

COUNTRY TEE.—The Tower of London is open free on Mondays and Saturdays by tickets issued at the office of the gateway; but on other days the admission is only sixpence.

STROKE.—The information desired in your first question is never made public, it is the owners' secret. Each of the big vessels, however, consumes about 200 tons of coal per day, and has a force of seventy firemen, forty coal-trimmers, and twelve engineers, besides boiler-makers and electricians.

SOLDIER LAD.—The 42nd's "honours" are Egypt, Coruna, Fuentes d'Onor, Pyrenees, Neville, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse, Peninsula, Waterloo, Alma, Sebastopol, Lucknow, and Ashantee.

KEW.—Christmas and all other lotteries (excepting Art Unions authorised by the Privy Council) are illegal, wherever they may be held, or under whatever circumstances.

WILL.—Equal parts of ammonia and turpentine will take paint out of clothing, even if it be hard and dry. Saturate the spot as often as necessary, and wash out in soap suds.

OLD READER.—The quality of the water drunk by the cow influences greatly the quantity and quality of the milk she gives. No beast ought to drink dirty, muddy water; water that the farmer himself would not drink.

EFFIE.—The twentieth century begins on January 1, 1901. The first hundred years does not end with the year 99, but with the year 100: the second century, therefore, began with the year 101, and the twentieth century, as explained, will begin with the year 1901.

MARTHA.—You may rub the coat vigorously with damp (but not wet) bran; that will remove surface dirt. We presume the coat is a light one; but no acid, or soap, or even water can be applied without destroying the coat.

T. T.—The English quarter-days are: Lady-day, March 25; Midsummer, June 24; Michaelmas, September 29; and Christmas, December 25. Notice may be given before the actual quarter-day if the tenant thinks fit to do so.

LORD CLARE.—An attempt to murder is not now punishable with death. The last execution for it took place in 1861, and the law was altered soon afterwards. A sentence of penal servitude for life may be given in such a case.

SUMMER IN THE HEART.

SPRINGTIME may lose its freshest tints,
And autumn leaves their gold,
The bitter blast and snowy wreath
May sweep across the world;
But the years are full of splendours
That never will depart;
For they shed eternal fragrances
When there's summer in the heart.

The shadows linger on the earth,
The sunbeams hide away;
The sad mists fold their chilly white hand
About the face of day;
The tumult and the rush of life
Sound ay in street and mart;
But they cannot drown life's music
When there's summer in the heart.

The city towers are crumbling fast,
And totter to their fall;
The ivied castle on the height
Shows many a ruined wall;
But men build eternal dwellings
With strange and wondrous art;
They are shrines for the immortals
When there's summer in the heart.

WANTS TO KNOW.—An article which has been openly sold cannot be made the subject of a patent. It is illegal to put on manufactured goods the words "patent" or "registered," unless they are actually patented or registered as designs.

T. M.—A monk of Pisa, Italy, named Alessandro di Spina, is generally credited with having first made public the use of spectacles, which, as far as can be learned, were invented some time between 1280 and 1311.

TOO BAD.—The attendance officer, according to your account, seems clearly to be acting within the limits of his duty. He has no power to judge the matter save by your producing the certificate that the boy has passed the standard required in the district.

MIDLANDS.—I. Lye is a township in Worcestershire, with a population of between six and seven thousand. 2. Derby—the name of the town—is pronounced as spelled. Lord Derby pronounces his name as though it were spelled with an "a" instead of an "e."

MISS BOVINGTON.—The literal meaning of above-board is, above the board or table; hence, in open sight, without trick, concealment, or deception. Johnson says the expression was borrowed from gamblers, who, when they changed their cards, put their hands under the table.

HAPPY BEESIE.—1. False teeth are healthy, that is to say, they assist in promoting digestion, when they fit properly. 2. If anyone were to ask you what "luck" was, what answer would you give? When you tell us that, we may be in a position to explain whether it is lucky to cut nails on a Friday.

NEXT DOOR.—Complain to the police. They have power to deal with the howling dog as a nuisance. At the same time intimate to your neighbour that if he does not tie up the brute to keep it out of your ground you will instruct an agent to sue him for damages. That should settle the case.

CLARENCE.—No young lady would speak of anyone as a "fellow." You seem to have got into your present difficulty through your readiness to believe any idle tales that were told you, and it is no wonder that the gentleman has acted as he has done. You can only wait and see if he turns to you again.

INDIGNANT.—A lover who would borrow money of his sweetheart and not repay it must be a base fellow indeed; and a girl who would gossip about her lover's sorrows must be an undecent style of angel. Take it all in all, the couple must be two of a kind, and probably no injustice would be done to either of them by their marriage.

ICE.—Ice is water in a solid state. It is formed under the influence of extreme cold, and is a nearly solid, transparent, brittle substance, of a crystalline structure. It floats in water, having a specific gravity of .9184. In freezing, it expands about one-eighth of its bulk. It freezes in hexagonal prisms. It melts at a temperature of 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

CLEMENT.—Your friend, as you call him, does not show much depth of understanding. The first ingredient in conversation is truth; the second, good sense; the third, good humour; the fourth, wit, or satire, if nothing better comes to hand. Sensible conversation is, of course, different from mere good-natured, social chit-chat, in which an easy, sparkling flow of meaningless talk holds the first place.

RAFFO.—Baffo, called the pure, was a Venetian woman, who was captured in 1580 by pirates, and carried to Constantinople. There she became the slave and afterwards the Sultan of Amurath III. After his death she became the adviser of her son, Mohammed III. She died during the reign of her grandson, Ahmed. She was remarkable for her fascinating manners and great beauty. Her influence over the Sultan and her son is referred to as extraordinary. She was retired by her grandson.

ANXIOUS LOVER.—Have you not heard that the course of true love never runs smooth? If not, it is time that you received a hint, and also learned that no human being's case is ever made an exception. Your case is not at all a critical one. Do not be scared. The young lady will be pretty certain to "come round," as you say, and so will her parents, if you wait patiently and refrain from exasperating them with your anxiety. Be quiet, and be as good a fellow as you can, on general principles.

PERPLEXITY.—You seem to be making a great big bang out of the fact that the young lady whom your friend is going to marry has been a correspondent of yours for the last six months. You do not say that the correspondence has in any sense been an improper one, or that her letters to you have revealed any tendency to moral delinquency on her part; and yet you talk about "protecting the happiness" of your friend, etc., as though the mere fact of a lady's corresponding with you were enough to stamp her with infamy.

JOAN.—You should make your style of composition as Saxonish as possible, if you would give it the highest possible degree of effectiveness; for there is no other language in which that class of words which are said to sound in echo to the sense so frequently occur. "Flange," "crash," "dash," "rustle," "whirl," "bowl," "him," and scores of other Saxon monosyllables, belong to this category. And then our most impressive terms of endearment and affection, such as "love," "home," "wife," are all Saxon, and for the most part monosyllabic.

MICROSCOPIC.—Some researchers upon the microscopic organisms that inhabit cheese. In Emmentaler, a soft variety of Gruyere cheese, found in each gramme, when fresh, from 90,000 to 140,000 microbes. This number increases with time. But the population of a cheese is not everywhere distributed the same in it. The centre is but moderately inhabited with respect to the exterior portion. The population of a soft cheese near the periphery is from 8,600,000 to 5,600,000 microbes. According to the mean of these two figures there are as many living organisms in 360 grammes of such a cheese as there are people upon the earth.

E. F. T.—Blarney is a village of Munster, Ireland, north-west of Cork, and is noted for its castle built in 1449 by Cormack McCarthy. The castle stands on the north side of a precipitous ridge of limestone rock, rising from a low valley. Of the original castle there remains only a large, square tower with a parapet breast high. On the summit is the famous stone, which, according to the picturesque legend, confers on the person kissing it the pleasant property of saying anything in the way of coaxing, compliment or praise most agreeable to the hearer. From this virtue the word "blarney" is derived. The actual Blarney stone is not the one generally osculated as such, but forms part of the wall several feet below its representative, and can only be kissed by a person held over the parapet.

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